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CHARLES WILLIAM FERDINAND, DUKE OF BRUNSWICK. AN HISTORICAL STUDY. 1735-1806

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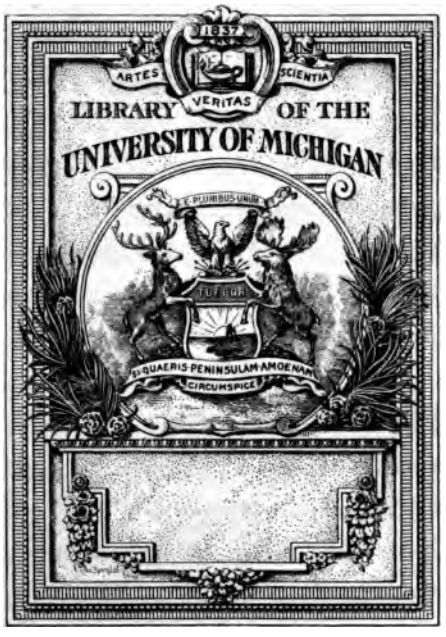
BY LORD EDMOND FITZMAURICE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CHARLES WILLIAM FERDINAND

DUKE OF BRUNSWICK

H.S.H. Charles. Hereditary Prince of Brunswick.

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By LORD [illegible] MOND [illegible] PRICE

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CHARLES WILLIAM FERDINAND, DUKE OF BRUNSWICK. An Historical Study, 1735—1806

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By LORD EDMOND FITZMAURICE

WITH TWO PORTRAITS
AND A MAP

LONGMANS, GREEN, & CO., 39 Paternoster Row,
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PREFACE

THE study contained in the following pages was originally published in two articles in the *Edinburgh Review* for July 1897 and January 1898. Lord Rosebery and Sir George Trevelyan having intimated to me their opinion that these articles might be of use to the historical student if they received a more permanent shape, the present volume appears in consequence.

The portrait of the Duke on the frontispiece of this volume is by McArdell, after a picture by Ziesenis of Hanover, the original of which belonged at the time of engraving to General Conway. As Ziesenis died in 1777, the portrait shows the sitter in the early part of his career. The smaller portrait represents the Duke in later life. It was engraved by Ridley and Flood, and published in the *European Magazine* for 1807 without the name of the painter.

The references to the 'Memoirs of Hardenberg' are to the edition in five volumes published at

Leipzig in 1877, and those to the works of Massenbach are—except where otherwise stated—to the Memoirs published at Amsterdam in 1809.

I desire to acknowledge the valuable assistance which I have received from Mr. W. C. Cartwright on several historical points, and from Mr. Sidney Colvin in regard to the above-mentioned portraits.

E. F.

January 30, 1901.

LIST OF PLATES

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From a picture by T. G. Ziesenis, the property of General Conway in 1761.

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From an engraving published in the 'European Magazine' in 1807.

MAP

CENTRAL EUROPE, 1786 26

CHARLES WILLIAM FERDINAND,

DUKE OF BRUNSWICK

THE numerous works recently published on the history of the French Revolution and Empire have again directed attention to the career of Charles William Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick. In their pages his name constantly occurs, but with an ill-defined sphere and an enigmatic action which in many respects have hitherto baffled explanation. The Duke held a distinguished place in all the transactions, both of war and peace, in the period between 1758 and 1806; and this place is seen to be of even greater interest and importance in proportion as the events of the time are more closely examined. But the reader is often conscious of being in the face of many apparent paradoxes and contradictions in connection with the life of the Duke, and of a frequent difficulty in finding satisfactory evidence to account for the unquestioned position so long occupied by him both in the camp and the Cabinet and in public estimation; and at

last takes revenge by calling the strategy of the Duke sinister and his character incomprehensible.[1]

The nephew and favourite pupil of Frederic the Great, the military career of the Duke is chiefly associated with the disasters of Valmy and Auerstädt. In the aged commander whose hesitations are the object of the wrath of more serious critics than the boasters of the Potsdam parade-grounds, the reader hardly recognises the brilliant chief who shared with his uncle Ferdinand the glories of Crevelt and Minden, and dashed across Germany to the rescue of Frederic himself after Künersdorf. Like his royal uncle a sympathiser with reforming ideas—one of the princely forerunners, in fact, of the French Revolution—he is, nevertheless, for ever identified with the manifesto of the allied sovereigns against the Revolution: the manifesto which, rightly or wrongly, has the credit of having been the immediate cause of the downfall of the French monarchy at the hands of the exasperated Republicans. Early in 1792 he is the object of an invitation, as will be related further on, from the advanced wing of the constitutional party in France to take the command of all her forces, with almost a certainty of having to lead them in a war against Austria; and later in the year he is offered, and accepts, the command of the allied army which invades France in order to put down

[1] Lord Rosebery, *Life of Pitt*, 130, 158.

the Revolution. At one moment he is acclaimed as the greatest general in Europe; at another he is denounced as the cause of all the misfortunes of his country. His life is the record of abrupt transitions. One half consists of great and continuous good fortune; the other, of terrible and ruinous failure. Born in 1735 his sun rises in youthful splendour amid the most brilliant glories of the Seven Years' War; it disappears in the gloom of disaster and defeat in 1806. Just before his death Kalckreuth declared him to be responsible for every coming misfortune; yet Rückert made his death the subject of one of those lyrics which aroused Germany against the conqueror, and Byron included him in the splendid tribute which immortalised his son, who fell at Quatre Bras.

By birth the Duke was allied to the Royal House of England, and his own military fortunes were originally connected with the disasters which befell another member of the Hanoverian family. In the war of the Austrian Succession the continental army of England and her allies was commanded by the Duke of Cumberland, who combined a leonine personal courage with a total ignorance of the art of war, made doubly dangerous by the defective vision which, on one occasion, caused him to be almost captured by some hostile cavalry mistaken by him for one of his own brigades. At

the battle of Dettingen a series of lucky accidents, and a want of skill then unusual in the French commanders, alone converted into a British victory a situation which, judged from a purely military standpoint, ought to have ended in the capture of the Duke, of his royal father, and of the Secretary of State, at a moment when such a disaster might have had fatal effects not only on the fortune of the campaign, but also on the struggle for the crown with the Pretender. At Fontenoy the British arms sustained a defeat which dimmed the lustre of Blenheim and Ramillies. At home, the officers whom the Duke favoured as his chosen lieutenants proved themselves at Prestonpans and Falkirk to be unable even to cope with an almost savage and totally undisciplined foe; and the facile glories of Culloden, where victory at length smiled on the ducal standard, were soon wiped out by renewed disasters abroad. When the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle terminated the war of the Austrian Succession, men were at least grateful that peace had presumably terminated the active military career of the son of George II. Unfortunately, when war again commenced in 1756, he was once more entrusted, through paternal and royal affection, with the command of the army which in 1757 was sent to defend the Electorate of Hanover and to co-operate with Frederic the Great by a diversion in Western

Germany. The usual results followed. Of the disasters of that campaign a pithy account has been left by no less a person than the King of Prussia himself. The forces under the Duke of Cumberland were steadily forced back into a corner beyond the Weser through the incapacity of the general, whose misfortune it was 'to think too late' of the necessary precautions.[1] They were finally forced to give battle near the little village of Hastenbeck. A total defeat ensued. And yet, had the Duke of Cumberland but known it, victory on this occasion was his. The French were the attacking party. At an early period of the action they captured the great battery which defended the centre of the position, and under cover of a deep and wooded ravine turned the Duke's left wing. But the central battery was suddenly retaken by a dashing attack, and the French force which had turned the Duke's left found itself isolated and surrounded. It fled, losing all the artillery and standards. The French general, M. d'Estrées, had actually given the order for his whole force to retire, when it was discovered that the British leader was himself already in full retreat. The sequel was the ignominious Convention of Kloster Seven. If one of the blackest pages in our military annals, it at least rendered the future employment of the Duke of Cumberland impossible.

[1] 'Penser bien tard.' *Mémoires de Frédéric*, i. 488.

After Hastenbeck the British Cabinet came to the conclusion that if the year 1757 had been utterly inglorious to the British arms, at least the seeds of victory might be planted in the hour of defeat by the immediate appointment of a more competent commander. The indignant voice of the nation, exasperated by failures in every part of the world, had just called the elder Pitt to power. Under his lead was formed the great Ministry which lasted till 1761 and restored the honour and reputation of the country. Pitt recognised that for the moment it would be better to place the British contingent abroad under foreign command; and so great was his prestige that he was able to win approval for proposals which, if put forward by others, might have been regarded as derogatory to the countrymen of Marlborough. The commander selected for the combined British and Hanoverian forces was Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick-Lüneburg, then thirty-seven years of age, one of the most trusted of the pupils of the great Frederic. He already held one of the highest commands in the Prussian army, and was governor of Magdeburg.

When the tide of fortune at Hastenbeck was for the moment turned, says the King, 'it was owing to the courage and skill of Charles William Ferdinand, Hereditary Prince of Brunswick, who recaptured the central battery, and by this *coup d'essai* showed

that nature destined him to be a hero.'[1] The Prince at this time was twenty-two years of age. He was the eldest son of the King's favourite sister, Philippina Charlotte, by her marriage with the reigning Duke of Brunswick, and was the nephew of the newly appointed commander. One of the immediate results of the failure of the Duke of Cumberland had been the occupation by the French of the Duchy of Brunswick. The Duke and his family fled, and the Hereditary Prince was on his way to Holland through Hamburg when he met his uncle, and was easily persuaded by him to take active service in the new army which was being assembled at Lüneburg.

The Hereditary Prince had received his military education under the eye of his two uncles, the King and Duke Ferdinand; his literary education under the watchful care of his able mother, and from such famous teachers as the Abbé Jérusalem, Hirchmann, and Gärtner. From his earliest years the highest hopes had been formed of his future career; nor were they now disappointed. In the long array of battles which distinguished the campaigns of the latter part of the Seven Years' War, the Hereditary Prince, sometimes as the leader of a separate force, on other occasions as next in command to his uncle, rapidly obtained the highest reputation. The names

[1] *Mémoires de Frédéric*, i. 489.

of the two Princes of Brunswick became a terror to the invaders of Germany, second only to that of the King himself. At Crevelt in 1758 they gained a victory which obliterated the evil memory of Hastenbeck. A defeat at Bergen in 1759 was followed by the great victory of Minden, gained on August 1. The refusal of Lord George Sackville to carry out the orders of the Duke alone saved the French army from a destruction as total as at Blenheim. On the eve of this battle, otherwise so glorious to the allied arms, the Hereditary Prince was despatched to the rear of the French army with a separate corps of 10,000 men. Having routed the Duc de Brissac at Koesfeld in an engagement distinct from that in which his uncle defeated the main army of the enemy, he cut off their retreat and converted it into a rout. The French were driven out of Cassel, the Bishopric of Münster and Marburg; and only the disaster which almost at the same time had befallen General Finck at Maxen prevented Duke Ferdinand from carrying his successes still further. To remedy that disaster, which had been followed by the defeat of the King himself at Künersdorf by the Russians, the Hereditary Prince was detached to support the King, who had meanwhile rewarded his services at Minden by composing one of those odes with which the royal author was in the habit of punishing his friends and

allies and cheering his own spirits in even the darkest hours :—

> Regardez-le, ma sœur, l'amour vous y convie,
> Dans vos flancs vertueux ce héros prit la vie
> Et ses rares talents ;
> Votre belle âme en lui retraça son image,
> De son auguste père il a tout le courage
> Et les grands sentiments.

And so on in thirty-three stanzas, which the curious can read, if they so desire, in the collected works of his Prussian Majesty.[1] 'His days,' wrote the elder Pitt, 'are precious to Europe.'[2] The King relates, but in sober prose, how on his return from Eastern Germany the Hereditary Prince, after other exploits, 'flew on wings,' and, with a musket wound still open, presented himself on July 16, 1760, before the gates of Fulda at a moment when nobody expected him. The reigning Duke had on that very day prepared a ball, and now only escaped capture by flight. Pitt describes the 'glorious event of the immortal Hereditary Prince' in a letter to Lady Hester. 'Five times he pressed the French infantry at the head of Elliott's; his horse wounded under him, and a led horse behind him killed.'[3] Nor was this, the King says, 'the last exploit of this hero,' for, undismayed by a severe check at Korbach, he quickly retrieved his reputation by a dashing success

[1] *Œuvres Posthumes*, xiv. 233-241 ; ed. 1789.
[2] *Chatham Correspondence*, ii. 10. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 54.

at Warburg.[1] The fury of the war seemed to concentrate itself wherever he was. It was related with enthusiasm how he had crossed the Weser in mid-winter and captured Hoya. This exploit became legendary :—

'I will tell you,' he said to Massenbach many years after, 'what really happened. It was in February ; the Weser was covered with floating ice ; the night was rough ; no fisherman could be found who had the courage to put us across. I found gold, and the men then found a supply of courage. They ferried part of the regiment of Hauss and the bodyguard safely across. A violent storm then arose. The remaining companies of these regiments had to remain on the right bank. With my small body of men I continued the advance on Hoya. The French patrols had neglected their duty owing to the fearful inclemency of the weather. We came on them at the first houses of the town. Out of one of these came a Frenchman. He looked at us, and tried to escape. But I seized hold of him myself, and grasped him by the throat. "You are a lost man," I said, "if you speak a word," and I pointed my sword at his breast. "Where are your comrades?" We marched straight forwards, and came on them so unexpectedly that they first became aware of our existence from hearing our fire. This fire settled the business. We were masters of the bridge. You know the rest. Alas! these times are over ; and they will never return. How lucky we used to be then !'[2]

The Hereditary Prince next undertook a diversion beyond the Rhine towards the Dutch frontier,

[1] *Mémoires de Frédéric*, ii. 159.
[2] *Massenbach*, iii. 239, 240.

with a view to besieging Wesel. Opposed to him was the Marquis de Castries with 25,000 men, and this force the Prince boldly attempted to surprise at night. Then took place the famous episode of the death of the Chevalier d'Assas, of the regiment of Auvergne, who, having strayed beyond the French outposts, met the advancing British and Hanoverian forces. Declining to accept quarter, he gave the alarm, 'A moi, Auvergne; voilà les ennemis!' and died under a hundred wounds, notwithstanding all the efforts of the Prince, who, struck by his gallantry, desired to preserve his life. The French army was saved, and the Prince fell back, with a loss of 1,200 men, after a desperate engagement; but his fine retreat gained the commendation of the King, and his reputation suffered no diminution. In the campaign of 1761 he was at first worsted in a skirmish at Stangerode, but shared with his uncle the credit of victory in the two days' battle of Kirch Denkern, where, almost on the very ground where Arminius defeated Varus in the Teutoburger Wald, they together inflicted a bloody repulse on the combined forces of the Duc de Broglie and the Prince de Soubise. In the campaign of 1762, which both parties felt was likely to prove decisive, having been placed by his uncle at the head of fifteen battalions of infantry and twenty squadrons of cavalry, he surprised the force of the Duc de Lévis, and nearly captured the

whole of it, the French commander only just succeeding in escaping in the confusion. But in a later enterprise of the same order, against a detachment of the forces under M. de Condé and the Prince de Soubise, which turned out to be supported by the whole French army, he was seriously worsted and himself placed *hors de combat* through a wound, when peace came opportunely to put an end to hostilities.[1]

Among the heroes of the war, friend and foe alike acclaimed the two Princes of Brunswick, especially the younger, whose exploits were of precisely the character to fascinate the public mind. The contrast with the Duke of Cumberland was obvious, and the genius of Pitt in selecting fit instruments for his policy was made the object of the greater laudation because just at this moment he had been driven from power by the intrigues of Bute and the Court, from whose incapacity a repetition of the disasters of Fontenoy and Hastenbeck might well have been expected, had England again been forced to tempt the fate of arms on the Continent. The admirable courtesy of the Hereditary Prince to the conquered, and the care he showed for the wounded—as in the case of Comte de Gisors, the brilliant son of Marshal de Belle-Isle, between whose character and that of the Prince Voltaire noted a marked likeness—rendered him

[1] *Mémoires de Frédéric*, ii. 251–252.

almost as popular in France as at home. Not that the Prince was unduly elated by his successes or by popular applause. The occasional reverses which he had experienced had left a deep impression on his mind, and a curious power of self-introspection, which he exhibited to the discomfiture of his admirers, caused him to betray a tendency to hesitation which already alarmed them for his future career. For Duke Ferdinand and the King he had an almost superstitious reverence: Prince Henry of Prussia used afterwards sarcastically to say that he was afraid of his uncles even when they were both dead. Westphalen, the secretary of Duke Ferdinand, noticed these tendencies as early as 1762, and declared that the habits of subjection to which the Prince had accustomed himself had injured his power of self-reliance in a serious degree; and Gaudi, the famous military instructor at Berlin, told Massenbach that in a great crisis the Prince might be found to lack decision.[1]

These criticisms, however, did not extend beyond a limited circle, and the impression of the transcendent character of his abilities which his campaigns had created did not grow less when it was seen how open a predilection was shown by the King for his nephew. Capable judges also began to whisper that if the military talents of the Prince were great, they

[1] *Massenbach*, i. 11, ii. 94. Lehmann, *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 305.

were equalled, if not surpassed, by his wisdom in affairs of state. 'He has the judgment and good sense of a man of forty years,' the King told Sir A. Mitchell, 'and he has made such progress in military affairs, that I could entrust the command of my armies to him.' [1]

On the conclusion of peace the Hereditary Prince visited the principal Courts of Europe, where his reputation had preceded him. At Paris his varied accomplishments made him as welcome in literary and scientific circles as his military reputation did with the army. Marmontel, Voltaire, Winckelmann, Nardini, are only a few of the names with which we find him associated on this journey. All were impressed with his knowledge and the brilliancy of his conversation. 'The Prince was as lucky as he was audacious in action,' says Voltaire. 'I noticed, too, the modesty with which he accepted the tribute paid to his deserved reputation.' [2] In England the enthusiasm knew no bounds. When, in 1764, he arrived, the destined bridegroom of the Princess Augusta, the whole population thronged to receive the hero; and with all the greater effusion because it was believed that the marriage was disagreeable to the King and the Ministers. Lady Chatham wrote to Pitt that

[1] *Mitchell MSS.*, British Museum.
[2] *Siècle de Louis XV.* ch. xxxiii.

'they almost pulled down the house in which he was in order to see him.[1] A substantial Quaker insisted so strongly on seeing him that he was allowed to come into the room. He pulled off his hat to him, and said, "Noble friend, give me thy hand," which was given, and he kissed it. "Although I do not fight myself, I love a brave man that will fight. Thou art a valiant Prince, and art to be married to a lovely Princess; love her, make her a good husband, and the Lord bless you both."'[2]

The public gratitude took a more substantial shape in a parliamentary vote of 80,000*l.*, an annuity of 5,000*l.*, characteristically charged on the revenues of Ireland, and a public endowment of 3,000*l.*, charged on those of Hanover. His manner captivated everybody:—

'The Court and the Ministers, however,' says Walpole, 'cold-shouldered the Prince; the plan was formed to disgust him, in order to send him away as soon as possible. He was lodged at Somerset House, and no guards were stationed there. The Lord Steward chose the company that should dine there, and every art was used to prevent his seeing Mr. Pitt or the chiefs of the Opposition. At the wedding the servants of the King and Queen were ordered not to appear in new clothes. But though these little artifices had the desired effect of affronting the Prince, they only drew mortifications on the Court. The people, enchanted with novelty and a hero, were unbounded in their exultations whenever he appeared; and, as the behaviour of the Court got wind, took pleasure, when he attended the King to the theatres, to mark their joy at the

[1] At Harwich, where he landed.

[2] *Chatham Correspondence*, ii. 271.

presence of the Prince and the coldest neglect of their Sovereign.' [1]

The Prince revenged himself on the Court by insisting on calling on Pitt and the leaders of the Opposition, and he was believed by a delighted mob to have turned his back on the King at the Opera. In consequence of these real or supposed amenities of royal intercourse he only remained in England thirteen days.

Frederic the Great is said to have objected to his nephew's English alliance, being still exasperated at the desertion of his cause in 1762 by the King and his Ministers after the fall of Pitt; possibly also because the old King feared the arrival in Germany of Princess Augusta, who was said 'to be lively and much inclined to meddle in the private politics of the Court.' But these apprehensions, if they existed, proved groundless; nor was it till the next generation that the union of the Prince and Princess came to be regarded as one fraught with none but unhappy results. Of two daughters of the marriage, the eldest became Duchess of Würtemberg, and ended miserably in Russia; the second was the unfortunate Queen Caroline of England, consort of the Prince Regent.[2] Of four sons, the eldest was wellnigh imbecile; the second was an idiot; the third was blind; the fourth was the son who fell at Quatre

[1] *Memoirs of Reign of George III.*, i. 348.

[2] One of the reputed sayings of Queen Caroline was: 'My father was a hero. They married me to a zero.'

Bras. 'Only private persons,' the Duke once told Massenbach in a fit of confidence as he pondered over all these troubles, 'are happy in the married state. The reason is because they are free to choose. One of my class must marry according to certain conveniences, which is a most unhappy thing. The heart has nothing to do with these marriages, and the result is not only to embitter life, but also to bring the most disastrous experience on those who come after. The children are mostly cripples in mind and body.' 'As he spoke thus,' says Massenbach, 'there was a look of despair on his face, and I mentally compared his eldest son and heir with Forstenburg, his natural son.'[1]

The Peace of Paris was followed by a long period of repose in Central Europe, broken only by the short war of the Bavarian Succession, which was terminated, after a campaign on the Bohemian and Silesian frontiers, by the Peace of Teschen in 1779. This campaign, brief as it was, greatly increased the military reputation of the Hereditary Prince. The King selected him for the practically independent command of a force entrenched in the mountains at a post near Troppau, whence the Austrian commanders vainly attempted to dislodge him. He describes how his favourite nephew 'hunted his

[1] *Massenbach*, i. 233. Forstenburg, who was beginning a brilliant military career, was killed during the campaign of 1793.

enemies, sometimes in the direction of Graetz, sometimes of Maerisch-Ostrau, sometimes of Lichten,' and defeated with heavy loss the force of General Ellrichhausen by a turning movement of great skill, proving himself, says Carlyle, altogether a Prince 'not to be pricked into gratis by Pandours.'[1] But even amid these successes the King complained that his favourite nephew seemed to him occasionally too ready to listen to divergent counsellors, and to follow the last opinion.[2]

In 1780 the reigning Duke of Brunswick died, and the Hereditary Prince succeeded to the *disjecta membra* and the embarrassed finances of the Duchy.

'Those,' says von Sybel, 'who saw him at this period at his little Court were astonished to find in the champion of Krefeldt and Minden a careful manager of the State, a zealous partaker and patron of every kind of intellectual progress, and an active and unpretending administrator. He gained the greater credit by imposing no smaller privations on himself than on the State, and by keeping up a very small army, notwithstanding all his fame as a general.'[3]

Féronce, the most trusted of his Ministers, holds a high place among the reforming statesmen of Germany.

[1] *Mémoires de Frédéric*, ii. 485. Carlyle, *Frederick the Great*, ed. 1865, vi. 600.

[2] *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, xv. 277. Lehmann, *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 305.

[3] *Sybel*, book iv. ch. 1.

'He was adored by his subjects,' says Beugnot, whom Napoleon sent to Brunswick, after the Duchy had ceased to exist in 1806; 'his acts of charity were not reckoned up, for it would have been an endless repetition. Intelligence, probity, devotion to the public good, were titles to his favour; and at a time when the Jews were shamefully persecuted in Germany he had placed a merchant of Brunswick, named Jacobson, on his Council of State—a Jew and attached to his religion, but a virtuous man and a philanthropist.'[1]

The edict of May 1, 1794, by which he introduced the principle of the control of all the revenues of the State, even of the domains, by the Estates, is a landmark in the parliamentary history of the Continent. A struggle with the Church over the control of education, though only partially successful, was the forerunner of similar and more successful battles elsewhere. The simplification of the machinery of administration, the division of commonable lands, the improvement of the roads, of the administration of charities and of the condition of the poor—every department, indeed, of affairs—received his untiring, it may be said his almost too minute, personal attention. When, in 1790, he relieved his people from every extraordinary tax, he became the most popular prince of the Empire. Some of his reforms, indeed, fell short of a full measure of success, owing to the opposition of the

[1] *Beugnot* vol. i. ch. x. Another Jewish adviser of the Duke was Ephraim, the Berlin banker. *Hardenberg*, ii. 298, 299, 357; iv. 271.

Estates of Brunswick, which regarded them as an inroad on their ancient privileges; and the attempt to introduce the complete separation of secular and religious instruction had to be abandoned, owing to the ill-will and hostility of the Lutheran clergy. But, after making allowance for the partial failure of some measures too much in advance of the time, his government of the Duchy from 1780 to 1806 must always be regarded as a memorable chapter in the administrative history of Germany, and even of Europe, as plans were there first put into actual operation which set men asking why they could not be equally well introduced elsewhere, when their success was already patent to the world at large in Brunswick.

The Abbé Jérusalem compared the active mind of his old pupil to a flame confined in a fireproof chamber. Nature had endowed the Duke with a fine voice, which he used with a certain vehemence in conversation. He had an admirable ear for music, of which he was passionately fond; and when not occupied with business, he would sit up late into the night performing on the violin, on which he was no mean proficient. His glance when irritated inspired fear; he insisted on the rapid and punctual execution of his orders, and was impatient of opposition. But his manner in general was full of a personal charm and attraction, which Walpole con-

sidered was the key to his success. He was very popular with his household, whom he good-humouredly allowed to tell him home truths ; an old servant at Brunswick enjoying in this respect a specially privileged position. To the pleasures of the table and gambling he was entirely indifferent. He generally drank milk ; never anything stronger than wine and water. Long dinners he particularly disliked, and on such occasions was generally observed to be moody and silent. A game of chess with an old friend was his favourite relaxation. He cared little for sport. Massenbach was of opinion that this was a misfortune, as it made him a less good judge of operations in mountainous and forest lands than he otherwise would have been. He possessed the faculty in an eminent degree of putting those who had business to transact with him at their ease in his presence, whether soldiers or civilians. He was polite almost to affectation, and had a perfect command of French. He could also converse in the local *patois* with the peasants on their affairs, which greatly increased his popularity ; but he cared but little for country life, and seldom visited his estates except on business. His life was divided between Brunswick and the camp, and in them his real interests were entirely centred. It was only when without occupation that he seemed to give way to his naturally impatient disposition, and he

then became dissatisfied with everybody, including himself.[1]

An enumeration of the able men who commenced or made their career under his auspices is the best tribute to his ability and power of discernment. It was at Brunswick that Hardenberg entered on official life. It was there that Campe began the reform of German education. It was the Duke who selected Lessing for the post of librarian at Wolfenbüttel; who put the Abbé Jérusalem at the head of the Collegium Carolinum, and brought Nardini from Italy to improve the musical taste of Germany. His unbiassed intelligence and fine sympathy for all the new and progressive ideas of the time rendered his Court second only to that of Berlin as the chosen resort of the *savants* and philosophers of France. Tall, and vigorous both in mind and body, with a dignified and pleasant expression, an open countenance, eyes of a deep blue and full of fire, which were said to resemble those of Frederic the Great, and a manner so courteous as almost at times to seem exaggerated, he reminded General Toulongeon of one of the old French nobles, with all the native grace but without the inborn prejudices of the class.

[1] See the anonymous notes contributed to the last edition of the *Biographie Universelle* in the article on the Duke, evidently from the pen of one of his household. In the *Early Married Life of Maria Josepha Holroyd* a pleasing sketch of the Court of Brunswick in 1781 will be found.

Possessed of so many brilliant qualities, the Duke, by the time Frederic the Great was nearing his end, had come to be regarded as the appointed heir of the military glories and political ideas of the dynasty, dividing the honours only with Prince Henry of Prussia, the brother, and Marshal Moellendorf, the special adviser and personal friend of the King. But the health of the former was known to have now rendered him unwilling again to tempt fortune on the field of battle ;[1] and the Marshal was considerably the senior of the Duke, and too modest to be a serious rival for power.

In 1785 the ambitious projects of the Emperor Joseph II. in Germany, and the disturbed condition of the Netherlands and of Holland, had given rise to the idea of the formation of a league of the minor German princes similar in character to the unions formed in earlier ages for the purpose of mutual defence. 'Nobody,' wrote the Duke of Gotha to the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, 'can be the head of the League except one person, the Duke of Brunswick. It would be an honour to serve under him.' But the Duke showed his usual deference for his uncle at Berlin by declining all advances, notwithstanding the entreaties of Hardenberg, until assured that an

[1] See the passage in the *Mémoires de Frédéric*, ii. 470 (ed. 1866), which was suppressed in the first edition.

acceptance would meet with the 'highest approval.' The Fürstenbund of 1786, consisting of Saxony, Hanover, Brunswick, Mecklenburg, and other of the smaller States, under the hegemony of Prussia, was then formed.[1]

To Brunswick, attracted by these events, went Mirabeau in the month of July of that year, charged by Calonne with a secret mission, and hoping to rehabilitate his own tarnished reputation, and eventually to step on to the recognised ladder of public employment. We get a record of his conversations with the Duke in the famous confidential letters, the subsequent publication of which, under the pressure of financial need, forms one of the darkest chapters in his chequered career. Mirabeau was a keen observer of mankind. Nobody had a quicker eye for the detection of a sham and for the exposure of weak points than the statesman whose epigrams still adhere like blisters to the characters of so many of those with whom he came into collision at a later stage. He, at all events, was fully persuaded that in the Duke he had seen a really great man; and his opportunities of observation were considerable. He visited the Duke at Brunswick on his way to and from Berlin, where he arrived almost at the moment

[1] Ranke, *Die Deutschen Mächte und der Fürstenbund*, i. ch. 12 and 13. Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution*, vol. i. p. 413. *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, xv. 277–278.

of the death of the King; and the Duke himself, having been summoned to Berlin by that event, was in frequent communication with the French envoy at the capital.[1]

'The Duke,' says Mirabeau, in a sketch characteristic in more ways than one of the times, 'will certainly not be thought a common man even among men of merit. His person bespeaks depth and penetration and a desire to please, tempered by fortitude—nay, by sternness. He is prodigiously laborious, well informed, and perspicuous. However able his first Minister, Féronce, may be, the Duke superintends all affairs, and generally decides for himself. His correspondence is immense, and this he can only owe to his personal reputation, because he cannot be sufficiently wealthy to keep so many correspondents in pay. Few great Courts are so well informed as his. His mistress, Mlle. von Hartfeld, is the most reasonable woman at Court; and so proper is his attachment, that when he had a short time since discovered an inclination for another lady, the Duchess leagued with Mlle. Hartfeld to keep her at a distance. Truly an Alcibiades, he delights in the pleasures and the graces; but these never subtract anything from his labours or his duties. When he is to act as a Prussian general, no one is so early, so active, so minute as himself. It is a mark of superior character and understanding, in my opinion, that the labour of the day can less properly be said to be sufficient for him than he is for the labour of the day: his first ambition is that of executing it well. Not intoxicated by military success, though universally pointed out as a great general (especially since the campaign of 1778, during which he all the winter maintained

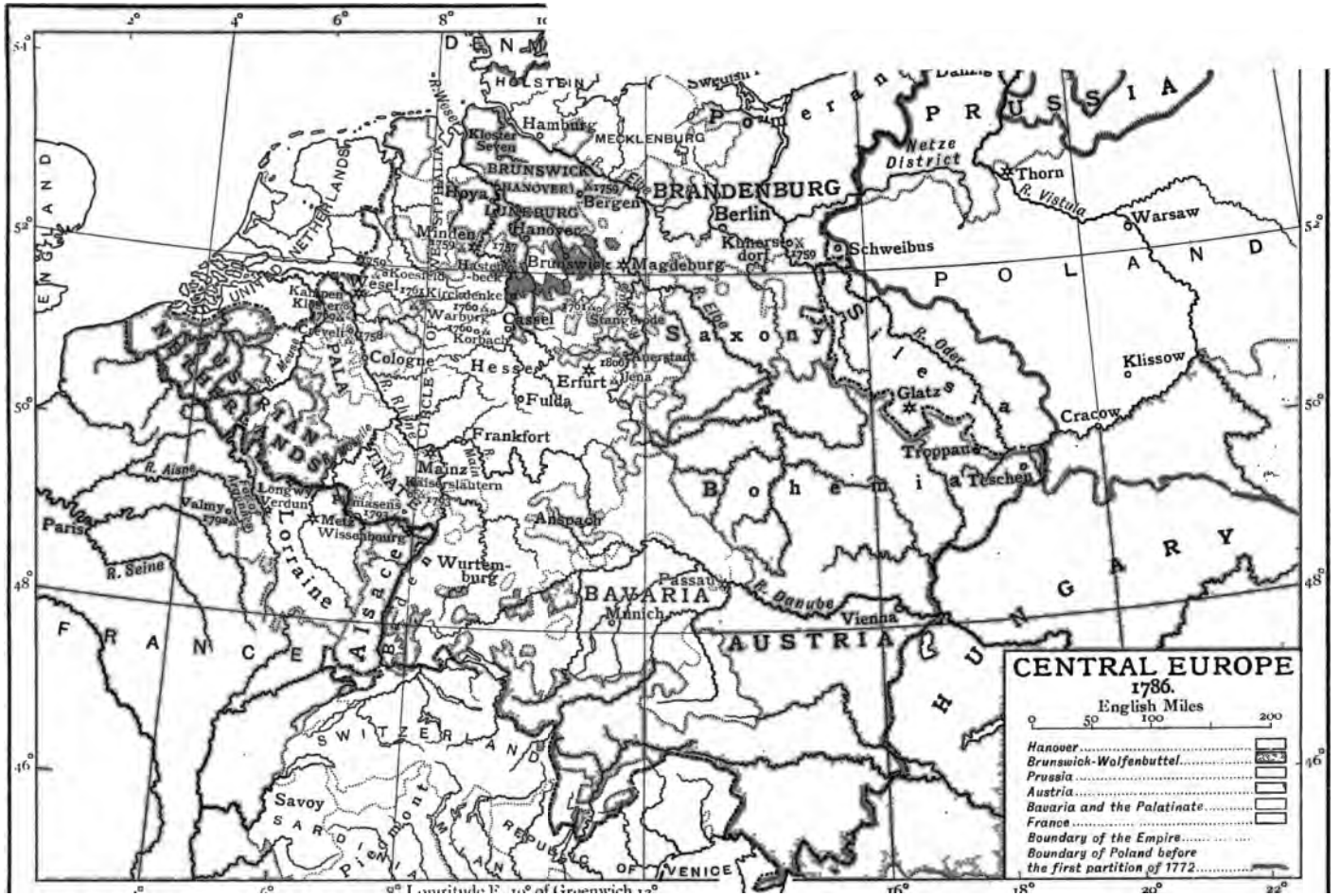
[1] In 1787 Mirabeau paid another visit to Brunswick, when engaged on the *Monarchie Prussienne*, but the Duke had then started on his way to Holland.

a naturally weak position at Troppau—to which the King of Prussia attached a kind of vanity—against every effort of the Austrians), he appears effectually to have quitted military glory to betake himself to the cares of government. He is, in a word, a man of an uncommon stamp, but too wise to be formidable to the wise. He delights greatly in France, with which he is exceedingly well acquainted, and appears to be very fond of whatever comes from that country.'[1]

The Duke denied to Mirabeau having ever been fond of war, even when most fortunate. He pointed out how, independently even of principle, both family and personal interest must make him strongly averse to it. 'Even if,' he said, in words almost prophetic, 'it were necessary in an affair so important to consult nothing beyond the contemptible gratification of self-esteem, do I not know how much war is the sport of chance? I have formerly not been unfortunate. Hereafter I might be a better general, and yet might not have the same success.'[2]

At the moment when these two remarkable men met, the Great Powers may be said to have been divided into the following groups. Under the Family Compact, France, Spain, and Naples were still intimately allied. The first of these Powers was also closely connected with Austria, under the arrangements made in 1756 by the Abbé de Bernis. Austria and Russia were engaged in war with

[1] Mirabeau, *Secret History of the Court of Berlin*, i. 18-21.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 12.


CENTRAL EUROPE
1786.
English Miles
0 50 100 200
Hanover
Brunswick-Wolfenbuttel
Prussia
Austria
Bavaria and the Palatinate
France
Boundary of the Empire
Boundary of Poland before the first partition of 1772
DENMARK
HOLSTEIN
Hamburg
MECKLENBURG
BRUNSWICK
HANOVER
BRANDENBURG
Berlin
Magdeburg
Brunswick
Hanover
Minden
Bergen
Hoya
LUNEBURG
Pomerania
PRUSSIA
Netze District
Thorn
R. Vistula
Warsaw
Schweibus
POLAND
Saxony
Silesia
Klissow
Glatz
Cracow
Troppau
Teschen
Bohemia
HUNGARY
R. Oder
R. Elbe
Cassel
Kirchdenkern
Warburg
Korbach
Stangerode
Hesse
Erfurt
Jena
Fulda
Frankfort
Mainz
Kaiserslautern
Cologne
Wesel
Kaiserswerth
Kempen
Kleve
Neuss
Bonn
Coblentz
Andernach
Ehrenbreitstein
Trarbach
Simmern
Zweibrucken
Deux Ponts
Landau
Spire
Manheim
Heidelberg
Philipsburg
Ansbach
Wurtemburg
Passau
Munich
BAVARIA
R. Danube
Vienna
AUSTRIA
Metz
Wissenbourg
Longwy
Verdun
Valmy
Pamasens
Paris
R. Seine
R. Aisne
Lorraine
Alsace
FRANCE
SWITZERLAND
Savoy
SARDINIA
Piedmont
MILAN
REPUBLIC OF VENICE
NETHERLANDS
UNITED NETHERLANDS
R. Rhine
R. Meuse
R. Moselle
CIRCLE OF WESTPHALIA
PALATINATE
Longitude E. of Greenwich

Turkey, and were united by an alliance formed in 1781 for eight years, and about to be renewed for a further term. Russia, supported by Denmark, was engaged in war against Sweden, and was known to entertain acquisitive designs along her whole frontier: against Turkey, against Poland, against the Duchy of Courland, and against Finland. England had just concluded the commercial arrangements of 1786 with France, which Pitt regarded as the first step towards establishing improved political relations also. In the Netherlands, the great English Minister desired to stay the effects of the rash reforms and meddlesome policy of the Emperor Joseph II.: and in Holland to check the subversive plans of the party hostile to the Stadtholder. This party was supported by the intrigues of Calonne and the statesmen in France hostile to Prussia, which, owing to the marriage of the Stadtholder with the daughter of the King, had dynastic as well as political ties with Holland. In the East, Pitt desired to withstand the advance of Russia, not from any sympathy with Turkey, but on grounds of general policy. The Emperor Joseph II., contrary to the plans of his predecessors on the throne, was supporting the aggressive designs of the great Northern empire, and hoped to obtain the active support of France in so doing.[1] Between

[1] Ségur, *Mémoires et Souvenirs*, iii. 553.

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the interests of England and of Prussia Pitt considered that there was a complete identity; and he would gladly have extended his policy so as to have included France in a common understanding, had France been willing.

In August 1786 Frederic the Great died. 'The old must give place to the young,' he had written to his sister at Brunswick six days before the end, 'in order that each generation may find a place for itself. Indeed, life is little else than witnessing the births and deaths of our countrymen. . . . My heart is always inviolably attached to you, my dear sister.'[1] In his will, in addition to other legacies, the King left to his nephew, the Duke, eight horses, amongst others the last that he had mounted[2]—a tolerably clear designation who he thought was most fit to be his military heir. Mirabeau was himself sure that the Duke was the destined successor of the King in the political control of the country also.

'It is peculiar to him, and to him alone,' he wrote, 'that, should he once grasp power, he will not afterwards let it escape him; for a better courtier, a man of deeper views, more subtile, and at the same time more firm and more pertinacious, does not exist. . . . Who then must be the pilot? Evidently the Duke. Of this I have no doubt. Not in the least boastful, and most adroit, he will be the man of the situation, not immediately, perhaps, but when the necessity shall call him. . . . I believe it all the more

[1] Lord Dover, *Life of Frederic the Great*, ii. 454.

[2] Mirabeau, *Secret History*, i. 103.

because in the day of trouble the petty self-love of his rivals will only be an additional incentive to fear; because this Prince is of all men most able to spare the self-love in question; because he will be content to act without appearing to do so; and because he will seem the servant of servants; the most courtly, the most humble, the cleverest of courtiers; while a hand of iron will fetter all paltry views, all petty intrigues, and every faction.'[1]

Contemptible in point of ability as was the successor to the throne of Frederic the Great, he nevertheless began by maintaining Hertzberg in power, who was regarded as representing the policy and traditions of the late King. The Duke accepted the staff of a field-marshal, and an opportunity for the display of his military abilities on a more important field and a larger scale than any yet granted to him was almost immediately afforded him. An invasion of Holland had been decided upon. The Duke had told Mirabeau that he ardently desired to see a good understanding between France and Prussia; but that the former had rendered it difficult by her friendship with Austria, and still more by her recent conduct in regard to Holland, the Bavarian Succession, and the East of Europe. In all these questions France had supported Austria and Russia; and in Holland she had supported the party opposed to Prussia. His own plan would have been an alliance between France, Prussia, and England, which should com-

[1] *Mirabeau*, i. 18, 82, 112, 131, 137, 346; ii. 42.

mand all other Powers to remain at peace: 'a sublime and seductive idea,' as Mirabeau acknowledged.[1] It was one he had himself, he said, been ruminating for seven years. We have already seen that such an idea was not outside the scheme of the foreign policy of Pitt. But the support given by France to the party in Holland opposed to the Stadtholder encouraged that party to an open attack, and rendered useless all the plans which were floating through Mirabeau's brain. The situation was judged dangerous both in London and Berlin; and when, finally, the Stadtholder had to fly the country, a Prussian army was sent to restore order and the authority of the House of Orange. The command of the expedition by universal accord was entrusted to the Duke. The invasion of Holland meant the possibility of a war with France. The Duke had hinted to Mirabeau that in the event of the French party in Holland proving intractable, a military occupation of the country by Prussia, with the support of England, would be inevitable. 'There is little need I should remark,' Mirabeau had retorted, 'that the conquest which Louis XIV., Turenne, Condé, Luxembourg, Louvois, and two hundred thousand French could not make, will never be effected by Prussia, watched as she is by the Emperor, and now that Holland is supported by

[1] Mirabeau, *Secret History*, i. 48, 49.

France.'[1] But the result entirely belied these anticipations. The campaign was short and brilliant. English readers can follow the account of it in the letters of Lord Malmesbury, who accompanied the Prussian advance.[2] France, torn by domestic discord, failed to support her friends, and the Duke returned to Germany with his military reputation enormously enhanced. But it was the opinion of competent observers that the facile glory of this campaign was one of the principal causes of the subsequent ruin of Prussia, by encouraging an overweening opinion of the invincibility of the army. Not that the Duke himself was deceived by his own success. He told the younger Custine in 1792 that his army had run the most frightful risks, and that the Dutch, with the commonest prudence, might have destroyed it. On his return the Duchess observed, notwithstanding the increase of his popularity, that he seemed to be suffering from the nervous strain of these risks, and shortly after he became seriously ill.[3]

As the result of these operations, and in order to confirm their fruits, England and Prussia guaranteed the Hereditary Stadtholdership to the House of Orange, and formed the Triple Alliance of 1788

[1] Mirabeau, *Secret History*, i. 312.

[2] In the *Malmesbury Memoirs*, vol. ii.

[3] 'Mission de Custine à Brunswick' *Revue Historique*, i. 177. *Malmesbury*, iii. 156.

with Holland, with a view to the general maintenance of the *status quo* in Europe, so gravely menaced by the ambitions of Catherine II. and Joseph II. For two years this alliance was the dominant factor in the European situation.[1]

But in the eyes of Hertzberg there were limitations to the application of Pitt's conservative doctrines. At the time of the first Partition of Poland Frederic the Great had coveted the two districts of Dantzig and Thorn. Since the Partition they lay almost embedded in Prussian territory. Hertzberg, in order to obtain them, proposed to secure the retrocession by Austria of a portion of Galicia to Poland. Poland was thereupon to surrender Dantzig and Thorn to Prussia. With this view he was ready to offer Poland a guarantee of her remaining territories and government. If Austria, supported by Russia, resisted this arrangement, which was to be recommended to Austria by the cession to her by Turkey of the territory lost at the time of the Treaty of Belgrade, Hertzberg wished to let loose against Russia a coalition in which England, Sweden, Holland, Turkey, and Poland, were to be the contracting parties. The discontent in the Austrian Netherlands at the high-handed reforms of Joseph II. made him also devise a scheme for the recognition of their independence.

[1] See Mr. Lecky's observations, *History of England*, v. 273.

He proposed to avoid the risk of their annexation to France by an agreement with Pitt for their ultimate annexation to Holland, and to resist the various schemes of the Emperor Joseph for the extension of the dominion of the House of Austria in Germany, either by the old and favourite plan of the exchange of the Austrian Netherlands for the High Palatinate, or otherwise.

At Berlin two divergent streams of opinion in regard to the policy to be pursued by Germany towards Russia had long existed. The rise into power and importance of the great Northern State, then first recognised as a force looming up huge and portentous on the political horizon, had for the previous quarter of a century been causing serious misgivings in the minds of the statesmen of Western Europe. Shelburne, in 1782, had told Rayneval that he had wished in 1766 to hold a firm and decisive language to Russia and Prussia, and thereby prevent the dismemberment of Poland,[1] even then felt to be inevitable, unless some steps were taken to cure the anarchy of the country, which Russia laboured to maintain.

'Russia is a terrible Power,' Frederic the Great had written to Prince Henry in March 1769; 'in another half-century it will be making all Europe tremble. The issue of the Gepidæ and the Huns, who destroyed the Eastern Empire, they are capable before long of impairing the

[1] *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 262.

Western Empire, and of filling the Austrians with sentiments of grief and repentance that they, by their mistaken policy, have invited this barbarous nation into Germany, and have taught it the art of war. . . . I foresee no other remedy than in time forming a league of the Great Powers to resist this dangerous torrent.'[1]

But notwithstanding this deliberate expression of opinion, a different policy had prevailed; and Frederic, not being able to dam up the torrent, chose the alternative of staying the further advance of Russia towards the Black Sea by allowing her partly to dismember Poland in 1772, on the condition that Prussia should receive a large share in the spoils. The weakness of Turkey and of Poland in 1790 was now again presenting Prussia with a choice between the two alternatives; and, as in 1772, each policy had supporters. Pitt and Hertzberg were exerting their powerful influence in favour of restraining the further advance of Russia. With most of the old soldiers of the Seven Years War there was a tradition of hostility to Russia. How strongly the current was running in this direction in Berlin can be realised when we find Lucchesini, whom Lord Malmesbury afterwards declared to have been bought by Russia, writing to Göltz in January 1791: 'God be willing that we maintain the warlike tone which beseems us. We must absolutely revenge

[1] The King to Prince Henry, March 8, 1769. Sorel, *La Question d'Orient au XVIII^e Siècle*, p. 43.

ourselves on these filthy Scythians, who, spoilt by fortune, have forgotten the days of Frankfurt and Zorndorf.'[1]

These views were fully shared by the Duke. He wrote a memorandum to the effect that the further partition of Poland would be as dangerous to Prussia as the conquest of Holland by France; since by the former Russia would advance to the Vistula, while by the latter France would advance to the Rhine.[2] Mirabeau reported that he showed the greatest anxiety in regard to the 'oriental system' of Russia, and strongly objected to all new arrangements tending to the dissolution of Poland, which, in his opinion, required to be reconstituted with readjusted boundaries as a defence to the eastern frontier of Prussia. He therefore threw the whole of his weight into the support of the policy of Hertzberg and Pitt, so as to check, if possible, the external encroachments of Russia and the internal aggressions of Austria. 'I keep up my family connections,' he said to Mirabeau. 'We perhaps shall be the last who will be smitten by the overthrow of the Germanic body, because of the confraternity which unites us to the Elector of Hanover.' He was also ruminating a project of his own for the reconstruction of the Germanic Confederation, for

[1] Creux, *Pitt et Frédéric Guillaume II.* p. 99.
[2] *Massenbach*, ii. 58.

he could not fail to perceive that that antique and ruinous body must be propped up in order to be preserved; and that if it was not to fall, it must be repaired. The separation of Hanover from the crown of England by an exchange of some kind was part of this plan, in order to deprive France of a constant excuse for interference in Germany.[1]

It would appear that an offer was actually made to him at this time of the crown of a new projected State, which was to consist of Limburg, Gueldres, and Luxemburg. There is also little doubt that his name was mentioned for the reversion of the crown of Poland; but he foresaw that if rearrangements of territory on a large scale once began in Europe, his own duchy might be endangered in some new distribution; and the idea of such a personal aggrandisement was inconsistent with his own view of his true position as a German prince. He was at bottom more German than Prussian, however much he dreaded putting himself into opposition with Prussia. He observed with regret the tendency the King was already beginning to show to lean towards Russia; and above all things he dreaded the influence of Prince Henry, 'that partitioning Prince,' as he termed him, who, he said, might some day prove the worst enemy of his country,[2] and carry

[1] Mirabeau, *Secret History*, i. 30, 274, 277, 321. Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution*, i. 406, 413. *Hardenberg*, ii. 540.

[2] Mirabeau, *Secret History*, i. 312-314. Notes by Alphonse de

out even more dangerous schemes than the first partition of Poland, of which he had been the principal adviser. But his broad and statesmanlike ideas, Mirabeau began to observe, were largely paralysed by an inveterate tendency to see two sides to every question, and to be unable to decide between them when action was required. His brilliant imagination and ambitious energy began by catching fire at first emotions, although at the moment he might betray no outward symptoms but those of tranquillity; but the rein he had long since learnt to put upon his passions 'reconducted him to the hesitation of experience, and to the superabundant circumspection which his great distrust of mankind, and his chief foible—his dread of losing his reputation—incessantly inspired.' He also seemed to Mirabeau to have another great weakness: 'a prodigious dread of having his reputation injured even by the most contemptible Zoilus,' and to suffer, as a natural consequence, from a tendency to listen too easily to praise, 'if gracefully embellished and artfully concealed.'

The Convention of Reichenbach, by which Austria was detached from the Russian alliance, in August 1790, was the first victory of Pitt's policy.

Beauchamp in the *Biographie Universelle*, iv. 50, nouvelle édition. *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, xv. 279. M. Sorel says the Duke wished to acquire Hanover for himself (i. 406), but the passage he quotes does not bear out the statement.

It had the immediate effect of inducing Russia to make a moderate peace with Sweden, in order to prevent that Power joining the hostile coalition which Hertzberg was known to be designing. Denmark had meanwhile been compelled to withdraw from any further attack on Sweden; and a treaty had been concluded between Poland and Prussia on March 29, 1790, by which the two States mutually agreed to guarantee one another's territory, without prejudice to their rights to settle any outstanding territorial questions which had existed before the conclusion of the treaty. Dantzig and Thorn were meant by the negotiators, but any cession of territory was known to be so unpopular in Poland as to make it dangerous to mention the matter publicly, at least for the moment, and Pitt desired, if possible, to avoid territorial changes.

Thus far the policy of the Triple Alliance had been eminently successful. The death of the Emperor Joseph on February 10, 1790, had materially assisted it, not only by removing his ambitious personality from the scene, but by substituting for him on the throne the cautious and politic Leopold II., who was well affected to Poland, and desired to see a thorough reform of the constitution of that kingdom carried out. There now remained only the war between Russia and Turkey to terminate, and the peace of Europe would be secure.

To that object Pitt and Hertzberg, supported by the Duke, now directed their attention. France was already paralysed by increasing domestic discord, and the new men were known to be favourable to a Prussian alliance. Encouraged probably by the reversion of Austria, after the death of Joseph II., to her traditional policy of resisting the progress of Russia to the northern bank and mouths of the Danube, Pitt now made an advance on his former strictly conservative policy, and smiled on the plans of Hertzberg in regard to Dantzig and Thorn, evidently believing that the favourable attitude adopted by the Emperor Leopold towards Poland would help them, by facilitating the proposed exchange with part of Galicia. Russia was to be coerced by a threat of war into accepting them, and also into making peace with Turkey.

How the policy of Pitt and Hertzberg was defeated by the series of events connected with the failure of the British Government to secure the support of Parliament for the so-called 'Russian armament' of 1791, by the dread excited at Berlin at the idea that a reformed and reconstituted Poland might itself prove a menace to Prussia, by the obstinate refusal of the Poles to surrender any territory whatever, even by way of exchange, and by the alarm caused at Vienna and Berlin by the course of events in France, is part of the general

history of Europe. These events shook even the strong position of Pitt in England, and gave the long-wished-for opportunity to the enemies of Hertzberg in Prussia to charge him with failure. In Frederic William II. they unfortunately found a ready listener, especially when, instigated by Catherine II., they were able to tell the superstitious monarch that the finger of God pointed, not to a war to save Poland from Russia, but to a crusade to put down the Revolution in France, while the Empress performed the same kindly office towards the reformers at Warsaw.

After the brief attempt already described to appear as the continuator of the traditions of the previous reign, Frederic William II. had surrendered himself to the influence of mistresses—of Mme. Rietz, *née* Henck, who was created Countess of Lichtenau; of Countess Doehnhoff, whom he married, *de la main gauche*; and of Mlle. de Voss, who blossomed into the Countess von Ingenheim. It was even more detrimental to the interests of the State that the King allowed himself to be influenced by the spiritualistic ideas of the illuminati and by the Rosicrucian Society. These mystics and religionists, with Wöllner, their high-priest, disseminated an atmosphere of mawkish and sentimental pietism around them, and pretended to be able to evoke the shades of Moses, Cæsar, and

Jesus Christ. The true heirs of Frederic the Great had no place at such a Court, though Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick, then tending to a condition of dotage, joined the new sect. Hertzberg and his colleagues were pushed aside in favour of supple courtiers, such as Lucchesini and Lombard. In military affairs an outward show of respect was preserved for the Duke and Moellendorff; but Mannstein and Bischoffswerder, who had the support of the illuminati, and both professed, however jealous of each other, to hold their tenets, had the ear of the King. Favouritism reigned triumphant; the royal treasure was dissipated; and the whole system of the late reign was rapidly disorganised. 'The master, what is he?' Mirabeau had said in 1786. 'It would be rash at present to decide, though one might be strongly tempted to reply "King Log." No understanding, no fortitude, no consistency, no industry: in his pleasures the Hog of Epicurus, and the hero only of a pride which we should perhaps better describe as a kind of narrow and vulgar vanity.'[1]

By 1791 this forecast had been only too amply justified:—

'Oh! this Lichtenau,' said Massenbach, for once becoming almost humorous; 'the wife of two men, and the courtesan of the favours of every big-boned and lusty youth! And then, too, all these subordinate assistant

[1] Mirabeau, *Secret History*, i. 330.

concubines, whose only fatherland is the theatre! . . . Every heir to a throne should have three works, not under his pillow, but on his writing-table. The first is Machiavelli's immortal work; the second, Gibbon; the third, Adam Smith. But I never met Machiavelli, or Gibbon, or Adam Smith, when I have had to pay my respects to Frau von Voss.' [1]

Under the system which now ruled it has been pithily said that 'the officers interfered in Church matters, the theologians in political affairs, the diplomatists lectured the generals, and the generals felt themselves called upon to give their opinion on foreign policy, a state of things by which each and all were necessarily injured. It gave the country an Administration affecting piety, a bureaucratic Church, and a political army.' [2]

The whole grouping of the European Powers was now quickly changed. Hertzberg fell, and the alliance of Prussia with Austria with reference to events in France was the first consequence. The abandonment of the favourable policy of Prussia towards Poland, which was the legacy of Hertzberg's policy, was the next sacrifice. In the place of the recent guarantee of the integrity of the Polish territories, an agreement with Russia, on the model of the first partition, was gradually substituted. Poland, after the sudden death, by small-pox, of the Emperor

[1] *Massenbach*, ii. 155, 158.

[2] *Sybel*, book iv. ch. i. The corresponding tendencies in literature may be referred to in Lewes's *Life of Goethe*, book iii. ch. iv.

Leopold on February 29, 1792, soon found herself abandoned by Austria also, and was left an easy prey to Russia, which, after concluding a favourable peace with Turkey in January of that year, found herself with an entirely free hand in the East. This abrupt transition of policy on the part of Prussia was fatal to all the ideas of the Duke as a party leader. For resistance to Russia was now substituted an attack on France, and the policy of the reconstruction of Poland was displaced in favour of the second dismemberment of that unhappy country: at the very moment when, encouraged by the example of Sweden and the goodwill of the Emperor Leopold, she had cast herself free from the interested intrigues of Russia, and was reforming her government and administration. Poland was in future merely considered a convenient fund by the three Great Powers to draw upon: the fund in which Prussia was to find a compensation for the expenses of her share of the crusade against France; Russia for the temporary abandonment of her hostile designs against Turkey; and Austria for the abandonment of the ambitious schemes which she had so long entertained in Germany.

It was in connection with this projected change of policy on the part of Prussia that, in the month of February 1792, the Duke of Brunswick was summoned to Berlin to give his advice on the mili-

tary aspects of the new situation. In the previous year, luckily for himself, he had found in a serious illness a fortunate excuse for not attending the conferences at Pillnitz,[1] and in now obeying the summons of the King to Berlin he commenced the ruin of his career. At the commencement of 1792 he was at the height of his reputation. He held the first military rank in what was regarded as the finest army in Europe; he could at any moment have received the chief command in the Imperial service, if he had desired it; he had been offered the sovereignty of part of the Low Countries by one set of reformers, and, it was said, the reversion of the throne of Poland by another.[2] Hertzberg's early successes had been due to his support. He was connected by political agreement with the great Minister who ruled England and by marriage with her Royal House. If he had gone down into the grave at the same date as the Emperor Leopold, men would have said afterwards that not the least of the misfortunes of Europe had been that, on the eve of the events which followed, she had untimely lost the one man able to pilot her through those troublous times, the general able to lead her armies, the statesman pre-eminently fitted to moderate victory

[1] *Massenbach*, i. 23.

[2] The offer suggested in the House of Lords (April 8, 1778) of the command of the British forces in America was to Duke Ferdinand. *Parl. History*, xix. 1042.

by prudence; and historians would have delighted to linger round the problem of what the later action of his life might have been, even as they still speculate whether Mirabeau would have been able to bend the fierce democracy of France to his will, or if Chatham would have succeeded in restoring a good understanding with the American colonies, had his life been prolonged.

An incident had just happened which proved in a remarkable degree how great was the desire to secure his services. At the commencement of 1792 a constitutional Ministry had been formed in France to meet the recently elected Assemblée Législative. In this Ministry Narbonne had the leading part. Delessart was Minister for Foreign Affairs. Narbonne himself was Minister for War. He held the view that the security of the King depended on the strict yet vigorous support of the new constitution, and on the adoption of a spirited foreign policy against Austria. Though for a totally different set of reasons, the Girondins, who dominated the recently elected Assembly, held an identical view in regard to the policy to be pursued abroad. But for a great foreign war no general existed in the country who commanded public confidence. Lafayette, Rochambeau, Biron, Custine, and the aged Prussian soldier of fortune, Lückner, were the most prominent men in the service. But neither they nor Narbonne

himself were judged fully equal to the emergency. It was determined to look further afield, and Narbonne declared the Duke to be the man of the hour. The Girondins, even the Jacobins, regarded him as one of the friends of liberty. His sympathy with everything French, like that of Frederic the Great, was notorious. 'He only lacks a crown,' said Carra, one of the most famous journalists of the day, 'to be, I do not say the greatest of kings, but the restorer of the freedom of Europe. Should he arrive in Paris, I am ready to bet that his first step will be to go to the Jacobin Club and put on the bonnet rouge.' Dumouriez had done something of the kind, and Dumouriez was a known admirer of the Duke; so was Talleyrand. Lafayette approved the idea of sending for him; Mme. de Staël supported it with enthusiasm; and Delessart, though unwillingly, accepted it and placed it before the King and Queen, who in their turn also adopted it, though the latter thought it *une folle idée*. Such was the origin of the proposal which led in 1792 to the mission of François de Custine, the son of the general already mentioned. He accepted it with delight, and to Brunswick he accordingly repaired, armed with a private letter from Louis XVI. as his credential to the Duke.[1] The French

[1] Précis de la défense de Carra (1793), quoted by Sorel in 'La Mission de Custine à Brunswick:' *Revue Historique*, i. 157, and the authorities there mentioned. Klinkowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen et la Cour de France*, i. 312.

Archives contain the story of the mission in a series of despatches between Custine and Delessart. Custine arrived at Brunswick in the early part of January. He was a little disappointed at not finding the Duke so ardent a Liberal and Democrat as he had expected.

'He appeared, indeed, to identify himself,' Custine wrote, 'with the position of our party in France, and, speaking generally, with our principles. Some of them he had always approved; but to give a just and complete idea of him it was necessary to acknowledge that many others of these principles he totally disapproved, although his truly philosophical intellect thereby came sometimes into conflict with opposite sentiments.' 'I cannot define him better,' he summed up in his report, 'than by likening him to those reformers in our own country who, as they are endowed with intelligence and enlightenment, are the partisans neither of the aristocracy, nor of the clergy, nor of the long robe, nor of an arbitrary and despotic system. But with reference to that absolute equality of rights on which our constitution rests, it claims the allegiance of his intellect, but not his sympathy; he approves it possibly, but of a certainty he loves it not.'[1]

Custine, in fact, found in the Duke 'un grand seigneur philosophe, mais au demeurant un grand seigneur,' with as little love for democracy as for the clergy, and quite prepared to see in the Revolution another 'infâme à écraser.' His criticism of prejudices, his zeal for particular reforms, were, he said, united in him, as they were in Voltaire and Frederic,

[1] 'Rapport à Delessart, Feb. 13, 1792,' *Revue Historique*, 163.

'to a profound contempt for the vile multitude and for the ignorance of the mob.'

The Duke told Custine that he was satisfied with his own position. His business was to command the Prussian army in time of war and to administer his duchy in time of peace. He absolutely disowned all sympathy for the *émigrés*, and for the absolutist sympathies of the Court of Berlin; but he expressed pity for the position of the King of France, and a regret that the French Constitution had not established two Chambers, as Mirabeau had wished. He found no difficulty in clearly pointing out to Custine the impossibility of the proposal put before him. Custine, however, returned to the charge again and again. Like Mirabeau before him, he became more and more impressed by the ability and character of his host in proportion as his stay at Brunswick was prolonged. But the Duke was immovable. If war broke out it would, he said, be a war of aggression by France, and therefore, if placed in command of the French army, he would not be able to rely on the enthusiasm always evoked by foreign attack and invasion. The German princes were not going to attack France.

'What, then, would be my business?' he asked. 'To succeed by means sought in the genius of your nation, to which I am a foreigner, to give to your army the degree of discipline required by your new *régime*, and to regenerate it by a good selection of officers in a country where I prac-

tically know nobody. Believe me, the commonplaces and the sophistries of those who might asseverate that it would be against royalty that I would have to go and fight are not what can hinder me. I know what to think of such declamations, and to reduce them to their proper value. During the course of my existence I have not avoided great undertakings, and I know how to appreciate a leading *rôle* on the stage of the first theatre in the world. But I would have to be a very presumptuous or a very incapable man were I not to feel in this affair the utter impossibility of success; and being certain, as I am, in my present position of commanding some troops—if they are confided to me—at least as well as anybody else, I have too much *amour-propre* to be willing to risk my reputation in an enterprise altogether too hazardous and complicated.' [1]

So spoke the philosophic Duke; and after some further interviews this curious negotiation came to the inevitable end. An imperfect knowledge of the circumstances led M. de Lamartine and M. Louis Blanc to exaggerate the offers made by Custine into an offer by the constitutional party of the throne of France to the Duke.[2] Custine returned to Paris, to perish, before the end of 1793, on the scaffold on which his father had died before him; while the Duke, as we have already seen, was summoned to Berlin to advise on an enterprise of an exactly opposite character to that to which he had been invited by Narbonne. He had just told Custine that the

[1] 'Rapport à Delessart, Feb. 13, 1792,' *Revue Historique*, i. 167.

[2] *Histoire des Girondins*, v. xxii. *Hist. de la Révolution*, vi. 249. Lady Blennerhasset (*Life of Mme. de Staël*, ii. 86) points out that Sieyès does appear to have contemplated a change of dynasty.

German sovereigns were not going to attack France ; but on his arrival at Berlin he was offered by the King, in his name and that of the head of the House of Austria, the supreme command of the army which it had been decided should invade France ; and he was directed to prepare a plan of campaign for the conquest of the very country which he had just been invited to defend. In an ill-starred moment he obeyed the royal commands.

In his conversations with Mirabeau and Custine the Duke had shown the finer side of his mind. We see his unbiassed judgment and penetrating intellect criticising the European situation with marvellous sagacity, and refusing to be tempted into hazardous enterprises, even into those which political sympathy or the chance of further renown might have rendered most attractive. But at Berlin all is different. There he allows himself to be overawed by the King into becoming the director of an enterprise essentially distasteful to him ; an enterprise dangerous, in his opinion, to the political interests of Prussia, because certain to leave Russia a free hand in the East, and doubly dangerous from a military standpoint because of the existing confusion and corruption at Berlin. The enterprise, too, was the project of the King, of whose capacity the Duke had the lowest opinion, and of the French *émigrés*, whose ideas he detested,

however willing he was to accord personal hospitality to the Duc de Castries and other old antagonists of the Seven Years War, who had taken refuge at Brunswick.[1] He had told Custine, as he also told Massenbach, that he was very far from being of the opinion that the want of discipline of the French army was likely to cause a general rout, as the *émigrés* pretended was certain to be the case; that, on the contrary, he thought war would itself bring the remedy to that evil; that the valour of the French, excited to the highest pitch by the peculiar passions of the hour, would without doubt be equal to their established reputation; that, if he had to lead an attack on France, he would carefully avoid taking any precipitate course, or fighting pitched battles, in which chance always counted for much, as a French victory would mean ruin to her enemies, while a French defeat would be very far from definitely settling matters; and that his own plan would be to move several armies to different points of the frontier, and maintain them there, in the occupation of positions impregnable to attack, and there await the ruin of the French from internal divisions and disorganised finances, rather than from an overt attack, which would only rouse them to preternatural exertions.[2] Yet, at the request of the

[1] *Massenbach*, iii. 241. *Life of Beugnot*, vol. i. ch. x.

[2] 'Custine to Delessart, February 24, 1792,' *Revue Historique*, i. 176.

King, he now drew up a plan for the invasion of France and a direct march on Paris, and consented to lead the attack in person, at the same time carefully annotating the plan as not really his own, but that of the King, so as to justify himself before posterity. In the inner circle of his friends he did not keep back the expression of his dissatisfaction at not having been consulted on the policy of the expedition, instead of only on the military means of carrying it out. Nothing of any real advantage to Germany could result from it, in his opinion. He at once recognised the immense forces, the unknown strength, which lay behind the apparent confusion of things in France. No professional pedantry blinded him. Disorganised the French army and administration undoubtedly were, and whence they would get officers or supplies might not be clear, 'but a headlong plunge into the crater he dreaded above all things.' 'Our other complications may unravel themselves,' he wrote to the Duke of Brunswick-Oels, 'but would to Heaven we had done with these French devils!' And he plainly 'told Frederic William that events might occur of which the consequences would be incalculable, as the heads governing France were under the influence of an effervescence from which the most extraordinary results might be anticipated.'[1] As to the

[1] *Sybel*, book iv. ch. i., who is quoting from the correspondence at Brunswick to which he was given access, and also refers to Schlieffen's *Denkwürdigkeiten*.

Bischoffswerders and the Mannsteins, and the royal *entourage* generally, the late King, in his opinion, would have quickly sent them all about their business. But it was to the plans of the Bischoffswerders, the Mannsteins, and the *émigrés* that now, at the crisis of his career, he abandoned his own mature opinions, both on the political issues and the military methods to be adopted.[1]

There are mental conformations which are rendered faulty by a marked disproportion between the ingredients of intellect and of will, of mind and of moral force. A less penetrating and perfect intelligence, under the driving power of a more powerful will, often produces greater results than a broader intelligence moved by a comparatively weak character. So now, when the decisive moment arrived, which Mirabeau had indicated must sooner or later come, when the Duke would have to decide if he would act with authority or not, it was proved that the early suspicions of Gaudi and Westphalen were true, and that, while nature had granted him every faculty of the intellect with an unstinted hand, circumstances, if not nature herself, had deprived him of the equally necessary quality of moral determination. Hardenberg is said to have once implored him, if he disapproved the proposals put before him, at least to say '*No*' to them in a determined manner.[2]

[1] *Malmesbury*, iii. 166, 167. [2] *Hardenberg*, i. 93.

It was his want of power to do this, his lack of civil as distinct from military courage, which give so Protean an aspect to his career, and account for the opposite verdicts of his contemporaries, sometimes from the same persons, according as the intellectual resources of his mind or his failure to give effect to his own conceptions were at the moment most present to the mind of the writer.

Lord Malmesbury, who accompanied the expedition to Holland, and was afterwards specially accredited to the Court of Brunswick, describes, on one occasion, how the Duke, having laid aside all his *finesse* and suspicion, 'appeared in all his lustre;' and then soon after declares him to be 'all suspicion, cunning, and irresolution,' and 'to want mental decision;' adding that he failed in these respects as much as his daughter, Princess Caroline, did 'in character and tact,' which was to say a good deal.[1] Stein abuses him for his conduct in 1792 as 'selfish and insincere;' but in 1804 declares him to be the one 'noble' exception to the general meanness and imbecility of the lesser German royalties.[2] Massenbach at one moment compares him to the hesitating Mornay of Voltaire's 'Henriade,' who condemns the battle, pities his master, and then follows; at another he says he is the only man who can save

[1] Malmesbury, *Diary*, iii. 159, 160, 190.
[2] *Life of Stein*, by Sir John Seeley, i. ch. iii. iv.

Germany or is fit to command the army.[1] He extols the Duke in 1791 as the greatest general in the world; in 1792, after a remarkable instance of hesitancy at Homburg, he declares that he washes his hands of him altogether. In 1793, after the victories of Pirmasens and Kaiserslautern, he devotes page after page to panegyrics of the Duke's military skill and greatness of character.[2] In 1799 he fills the air with lamentations on the impossibility of inducing the Duke to act with resolution and to seize the helm of the State. In 1805 and 1806 we find him denouncing his want of strength of character; and then, finally, after the Duke's death, declaring that he, and he only, might have been able to save the situation after the battle of Jena. The worst of it was, perhaps, that the Duke knew his own weakness. 'I cannot resist it,' he told Lord Malmesbury; 'it is stronger than I.'[3] With advancing years the failing did not diminish. It was heightened by the sorrows of his private life, and by the apprehension, constantly present to his mind, that if the policy of his own little duchy did not move in the orbit fixed from Berlin he might bring political ruin on his family. It was further stimulated by an almost superstitious feeling as to the military obedience

[1] *Massenbach*, i. 50, 134, 147, 234; ii. 3, 4.

[2] 'Ich betrachtete Carln Wilhelm Ferdinand als den Hirt und Stolz der Preussen und den Heros des Zeitalters.' *Massenbach*, ii. 47.

[3] *Malmesbury*, iii. 160.

due by him to the King, which compelled him, as he thought, though a sovereign prince, to obey, as a marshal of the Prussian army, whatever orders came from the successor of Frederic the Great, incompetent—in his own well-matured judgment—as he knew that successor to be, and thoroughgoing as was his own contempt for all the subordinate personalities of the Berlin Court, whom he depicted to Custine either as odious or as personally ridiculous.[1]

The Duke had a horror of the *émigrés*, who swarmed into his camp at Koblentz. 'He could scarcely,' says an eyewitness, 'find elbow-room in the crowd of them. He paid compliment after compliment, and made obeisances to the very ground; but his cheeks glowed, and his eyes glittered like those of a tiger.'[2] And yet from Koblentz on July 25 was issued the celebrated manifesto to the French people, which embodied all the fiercest passions of the French *émigrés*, and this manifesto, alas! was signed 'Brunswick.' It is immaterial whether the publication, coming as it did at so critical a moment, was or was not the cause of the excesses of September in Paris. This will be a matter of permanent controversy. But the misery of the thing is that the most liberal and enlightened Prince of his time, a known sympathiser

[1] 'Custine to Delessart, February 13, 1793,' *Revue Historique*, i. 173. *Malmesbury Memoirs*, iii. 173.

[2] *Massenbach*, i. 33.

with France and with all reasonable reforms, should, contrary to his own feelings and wishes, have allowed himself to yield to the wishes of the King, and be persuaded into attaching his name to this fatal document—and subsequently to two others of the same character—of which not he, but one M. Geoffroy de Limon, who was acting as secretary to the Comte de Provence and his little Cabinet of exiles, was the real author. When Bertrand de Molleville, in his 'Memoirs,' charged the Duke with having been the author of the manifesto, the Duke solemnly denied it, and asked if people wished to take him for an 'unreflecting madcap.'[1] Years after, when Massenbach observed on the fearful menaces which they had then hurled against France, 'Ah,' replied the Duke, 'that unlucky manifesto! I shall repent it to the last day of my life. What would I not give never to have signed it!'[2]

'A great man,' said the 'Moniteur,' 'has made himself the instrument of a faction.' 'It is the *émigrés*,' wrote the Italian adventurer Gorani from Paris to the Duke—and the Duke got the letter—'who have deceived your Highness.' He was wrong. The Duke had yielded in despite of his own better knowledge.[3] Klopstock, with the true

[1] Mallet du Pan, *Mémoires et Correspondance*, i. 236.

[2] *Massenbach*, i. 236.

[3] Chuquet, *La Première Invasion Prussienne* (ch. iii.), gives an account of the whole subject.

voice of genius, had already called on him, for the sake of his own reputation, to throw up the command; and Klopstock was right. But the Duke allowed himself to be persuaded into keeping it.

Next to the *émigrés* the Duke most of all disliked his Austrian allies, whom he suspected from the Emperor Francis II. downwards of ambitious designs. 'The Duke of Brunswick,' Pellenc wrote to Pitt, 'is, without fear of contradiction, the cleverest and the most deceitful man in Germany. His political principles are notorious. He detests the Court of Vienna.'[1] And yet the Duke consented to command an army which was as much an Austrian as a Prussian force, and with objects as much dictated by the policy of the Court of Vienna as by that of Berlin, and supported also by the Empress Catherine. The plot in the East was thickening, and the risk of sending the bulk of the Prussian army headlong into France grew more and more obvious every day when a Russian army was evidently about to enter Poland. The Duke could not fail to notice how anxiously the Russian emissaries at the royal headquarters were pressing for the advance upon Paris, and he knew the reason.[2] And yet he consented to lead the advance, and become responsible for it. The consequences to the history of Europe and to his own hitherto

[1] Mirabeau, *Correspondence*, iii. 396. [2] *Massenbach*, i. 96–7, 196; ii. 16.

unquestioned reputation will be seen in his later career, which was as much marked by misfortune as the former part of his life had been distinguished by uninterrupted success.

The allied army did not reach the French frontier till the 23rd of August. The season was late for commencing operations, and the weather at once became detestable. The Austrians, as usual, arrived behind time, and not in the numbers which they had promised. The Duke soon had to complain bitterly of the inefficiency of many of the generals to whom high commands had been assigned, and of the bad marching of some of his own troops. The season was unusually wet, and dysentery of a serious character began to make ravages in the camp. Discipline became relaxed, and the effective number of the forces was thus quickly reduced. French historians have given glowing accounts of the splendid condition of the allied army, in order to heighten the contrast with their own new and inexperienced levies; but military eyewitnesses give a very different version of the relative condition of the opposing forces, especially as the campaign advanced and the weather, which had decidedly taken sides with the Republic, grew worse and worse, and gradually turned the country into a swamp and made the roads impassable.[1] The Duke accordingly became

[1] Chuquet, *Invasion Prussienne*, 107–112, 215–217. *Valmy*, 169, 224. *Retraite de Brunswick*, 253.

more than ever determined not to advance upon Paris, but to hold to his own original conception of the plan of campaign, as described in conversation with François de Custine. He desired to limit it to the capture of the fortresses—Longwy, Montmédy, Sedan—along the line of the Meuse, to outmanœuvre any French armies which might advance to their relief, and then occupy a strong position near the frontier to form the base of the operations of the next campaign.[1] It was no part of this plan even to besiege Verdun. To plunge into the heart of France late in the autumn, with the fortresses uncaptured in his rear, and the country, notwithstanding all the promises of the *émigrés*, likely to prove hostile, was, he considered, an enterprise of a most doubtful character. The King, on the other hand, could see no difficulties, and was constantly pushed on by the *émigrés*, who promised that the country would rise in his favour, and that at least one of the French armies would desert. 'I do not at all understand the Duke,' Frederic William is reported to have said; 'he is always in want of five hundred men. Whatever directions are given, whatever expedition is confided to him, he always alleges a deficiency of forces. If I give him two hundred thousand men, he will ask me for a second army, in order to be in a condition to act with the first.'[2]

[1] *Massenbach*, i. 44. [2] Mallet du Pan, *Mémoires*, ii. 503.

'Let anybody,' Pellenc wrote to Pitt, 'judge the Duke by his conduct. To-day he is disapproving; he is combating every plan put before him, whether for the Prussian or for the allied army; and by these criticisms, which doubtless have an object, he prolongs a fatal inaction.'[1] But though the Duke objected, he yielded.

'Posterity,' says von Sybel in the estimate he makes of the Duke at this moment, 'will not deny him the possession of many of the highest qualifications for command. . . . But he loved too much to look at every side of a subject, and formed the habit, most questionable in a soldier, of recognising the relative claims of an opponent, of giving too great prominence to the difficulties of every undertaking and the weak points of every plan. As a natural consequence of this disposition, he was extremely unwilling to express an opinion, and liked better to hint at measures than openly to adopt and carry them out. Almost involuntarily he always prepared concealed and unobserved modes of operation. When met by opposition he became incapable of standing his ground, even against the narrowest and most one-sided views, if they were but maintained with warmth and decision. He was angry indeed with his opponents, and doubly so with himself for not being able to maintain the right; but he invariably yielded in every point. And what made the matter worse, he could not once for all entirely give up his own opinion; but partly from self-love, and partly from a sense of duty, he returned ingeniously enough to the course which he had abandoned, and in this way not infrequently incurred the suspicion of double dealing.'[2]

[1] *Correspondance de Mirabeau*, iii. 396. [2] *Sybel*, ii. book iv. ch. i.

These defects were closely allied to another—a pedantic attention to trivial details, which he ought to have been able to overlook altogether at serious moments. It may or may not be true that on one occasion, in 1806, he spent a long time in considering whether he ought to write 'Münchenholzen' or 'Münchholzen;' or that on another in 1793, having observed that the last battalions of the rearguard were not marching with the regularity usual on the parade-ground, he made them go back and march over the ground again. What is certain is that even so friendly a critic as Boyen expressed his sorrow at the amount of time he wasted and the attention he gave when on active service to 'Kamaschendienst,'[1] and at his apparent unwillingness or powerlessness to rise above it. Even the fact that such stories as the above could be invented and found credence, though possibly untrue, is sufficient. Nobody had ever asked that such things should be believed either of 'Uncle Ferdinand' or 'Uncle Fritz.'

The Duke began his concessions by agreeing to besiege Verdun after the fall of Longwy. In the defence published in 1795, which he inspired, and in his conversations with Massenbach, he distinctly states that the plan of campaign adopted was not his own, but was forced on him by the King, and that the King's plan was based on the promises of

[1] 'Pipeclay' or 'red tape.' *Boyen*, i. 151.

the *émigrés*, in which he did not in the least himself believe. He points out that in consequence he was never more than a nominal commander-in-chief, and was obliged in essential matters to yield to 'des volontés supérieures.' The reason was, he said, that

'A king of Prussia is not a king of France—a Louis XIV.—who leaves to the Prince de Condé, or to Marshal Turenne, the entire disposal of events. The kings of Prussia are essentially a military family; in them centre during a campaign all the rays of the general direction, and the influence of a commander-in-chief is reduced to a reaction against them.' [1]

The proof of this was about to be seen. On September 5 Verdun fell, and the cry was 'Forward to Paris!'

'Those,' said Massenbach, 'who asserted that, immediately after the fall of that fortress, the army was to march on to the forest of Argonnes had learnt the art of war among the Iroquois. That the Duke might have acquired a greater reputation if in anger and discontent he had quitted the army which was devoted to him; if he had abandoned a king to whom he was devoted; and had deserted Prussia, which was to him a second fatherland—all this I am prepared to argue. But a real man respects his sense of duty more than his reputation, and it may be said in general that it was the constant fate of the Duke to sacrifice his reputation, as he eventually did his life, to the House of Hohenzollern.' [2]

[1] *Lettre sur la Vie de Dumouriez*, London, 1795. *Massenbach*, i. 324.

[2] *Massenbach*, i. 51–54.

It was accordingly determined to advance on Châlons, and so on Paris. The Duke, it then appears, first proposed to turn the long line of the Argonnes, into which the French army had thrown itself—the so-called Thermopylæ of France —by a movement in the direction of Bar-le-Duc, Revigny-aux-Vaches, and Vitry-le-François, which would have enabled the army to debouch on to the plains to the south, where they could have used their cavalry and cut off the communication at once between Châlons and Paris and Metz and Châlons. But he allowed himself to be persuaded into abandoning this plan, because he would thereby have lost touch with the Austrians on his right.[1] Besides the route by Bar-le-Duc there were two alternative lines for a march on Châlons, and so on Paris. The first lay through the southern defiles of the Argonnes, known as Les Islettes, which Kalckreuth and the King wished to seize at once before the French had had time to fortify them. But the adoption of this plan meant an immediate attack and a pitched battle; and the Duke, objecting to the risk, characteristically attempted to get rid of the royal wishes by delays. In a few days he found the Islettes so strongly fortified as to justify his objections, and he then fell back on the second

[1] Chuquet, *Retraite de Brunswick*, 252. *Valmy*, 87. *Massenbach*, i. 57.

alternative route, that by the north, because it enabled him to keep in easy touch with his Austrian allies. He reckoned that, if he could turn the northern passes, the army of Dumouriez would be forced to evacuate them and the central pass of Grandpré as well without fighting.[1] The army accordingly moved forward, and the central defiles of the Argonnes were, as proposed, turned by a well-conceived series of manœuvres to the north, which, if slowly executed, owing to the terrible weather and the ravages of illness, were entirely successful. The weather prevented a vigorous pursuit, and saved the retreating French army from destruction on the plain of Montcheutain. Dumouriez was thus able to retire to the south on Ste. Ménehould, taking up a strong position with his back to the hills and forest, where he was joined by Kellermann coming from Metz, who would not have been able to do so if the Duke had moved his army round by Bar-le-Duc. The southern defiles, known as Les Islettes, lay behind the French generals, and were still occupied in force by General Dillon. The Duke then devised a second series of turning operations, of which the certain result—as the reader of M. Chuquet's narrative can hardly doubt—would have been to dislodge the French generals from their positions. 'A single manœuvre would have

[1] Chuquet, *Valmy*, 90.

compelled Dumouriez to let go of the Argonnes and to retire, not without difficulty, behind the Marne.'[1] But these cautious counsels did not suit the bellicose humour of the King. Unable to realise the difficulties caused by the condition of the army, he had been greatly irritated because the Duke had not attacked Les Islettes and hotly pursued the retreating forces of Dumouriez after the capture of the passes of Croix-aux-Bois and Grandpré; and now, deceived by some unauthentic intelligence brought in by General Köhler, he overruled the Duke's plan for a turning operation on the very day it was to commence. The Duke did not conceal his mortification. Massenbach met him just after he had received the royal command. 'I never in my life saw him,' he says, 'more discontented, or the expression of his face look stormier. His cheeks glowed and his eyes flashed. . . . But he rapidly resumed his self-command. I admired and I pitied him, for he was struggling with hostile fate.'[2]

The King now insisted on moving his whole army to the left bank of the Aisne, in order to place himself between Dumouriez and Paris, and so prevent the latter escaping him, instead of operating on the right bank as proposed by the Duke, who saw the danger of separating himself from his base and

[1] Chuquet, *Valmy*, 172, 173. [2] *Massenbach*, i. 79, 80.

food-supplies at Verdun, with both the river and the forest behind him, and therefore wished at all hazards to restore regular communications with Verdun by now capturing Les Islettes before moving on.[1] The practice of an army living on the country it invaded had not yet been introduced, and under any circumstances would have been difficult in this campaign, as the French had wasted Champagne. The question of supplies 'hung like a dead weight on our legs,' says Massenbach.[2] It was under these circumstances that the two armies at length stood face to face at La Lune and Valmy on September 20, the allied army being nearer Paris than the French, but at a great distance from its base and supplies, and in danger of being entirely cut off from both if defeated. Why, it has often been asked, did the Duke refuse to allow a serious attack on the hostile position? Many answers have been given. The patriotic school of French historians have asked the world to believe that the armies of ancient Europe fled in terror before the courage and enthusiasm of the newly organised levies; in reply to which it has been repeatedly pointed out, not only that no real battle took place, but that the army of Dumouriez and Kellermann was largely composed

[1] *Massenbach*, i. 115. 'Ein heilloser Marsch' is the expression Massenbach applies to the King's strategy. It may be noted that the German army fought the battle of Gravelotte in a similar position, being nearer the French capital than the army of Marshal Bazaine.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 68.

of the line regiments of the old army of France. It was not till 1794, and under the organising genius of Carnot, that the new armies sprang into existence which were to overrun half Europe before the century was over. Another school of writers have declared that somewhere convincing evidence existed—only they could not produce it—that Dumouriez had taken advantage of the admiration for the Duke, which he shared with so many of the French generals, to open up negotiations with him, and had succeeded in bribing him with the spoils of the captured palaces of Paris into drawing off his army and retiring into Germany.[1] It is hardly necessary now to discuss these absurdities. The true explanation has already been indicated. The Duke considered that his army was in so dangerous a position, owing to the adoption of the Royal plan, that he declined to expose it to the risk of a pitched battle, though from the King to the last private they were all clamouring for it. It is impossible to deny that on this occasion at least the Duke showed great strength of will. His army was decimated by illness and his field artillery was insufficient. The position of the French army at Valmy also, as he told Massenbach two days afterwards, had reminded him of one of his early checks in the Seven Years

[1] Beauchamp, *Mémoires d'un Homme d'Etat*, whose statements are repeated by Menzel in his German history.

War, when he attacked the Prince de Condé under a mistaken impression that the force in front of him was only a detachment, and was in consequence badly beaten.[1] But this was but a secondary reason for his decision. The real reason was the position of his force. The passage of the army to the left bank of the Aisne was the act of the King, and in the opinion of Massenbach an act of madness.[2] 'The situation in which his army stood—this was the great and real reason which induced the Duke to suspend the attack. . . . He was determined not to put himself at the mercy of a reverse.'

'The enemy,' wrote Lombard, the King's private secretary, 'had disappointed our hopes. Dumouriez and Kellermann had proved themselves generals not to be despised. They had chosen excellent positions; they had under their orders all that remained of the old French troops of the line; the volunteers helped by their numbers, and were in a position to render real services when attached to the veteran troops; their light cavalry was excellent, and quite fresh. Their army lacked nothing, and we—we lacked everything. They were well fortified in their positions, both front and rear, and their artillery was at least equal to ours. This was what prevented a decisive blow being struck.'[3]

The affair at Valmy in itself was little more than a cannonade. The number of killed and wounded was insignificant. But the results were as important

[1] See *supra*, p. 12, and *Massenbach*, i. 99–102.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 78, 115. [3] Chuquet, *Valmy*, pp. 237–238, 242–243.

as if a great engagement had been fought and lost, and the cannonade has taken a place among the fifteen decisive battles of the world. 'From this place and from this day forth,' said Goethe, who accompanied the Duke of Weimar, 'commences a new era in the world's history; and you can all say that you were present at its birth.' 'The 20th of September,' said Massenbach, 'puts a new face on the world; it is the most important day of the century.'[1]

While the allied army was moving into France the complicated negotiations had been continuing, to which the second dismemberment of Poland, projected by Russia and Prussia, and the various schemes of 'compensation' for not sharing in it put forward by Austria, had given rise. The Emperor Francis, who was already beginning to show that he intended to be the successor of Joseph II. and not of Leopold II., was pressing for an exchange of the Austrian Netherlands for Bavaria, and the cession by Prussia of the Margraviates of Anspach and Baireuth, or the acquisition of the Sundgau or of some part of Alsace, as an addition to his hereditary dominions. These proposals were viewed with alarm by the Prussian statesmen. Dumouriez had quite recently been Minister for Foreign Affairs, and both he and the Ministers in Paris were aware

[1] Goethe, *Campaign in France*, 93; *Massenbach*, i. 94.

of the mutual jealousies of the allies. He believed that he could hold out offers to Prussia of a separate peace with a reasonable prospect of success, thereby striking the first note of the policy which ended in the Treaty of Bâle. Very shortly after the battle of Valmy the news of the events of September and of the proclamation of the Republic had arrived. It became evident that the main object of the expedition, the rescue of the King and Queen of France from their durance in Paris, was no longer possible. With the approach of the winter season the position of the allied army on the right bank of the Aisne, with the Argonnes and the uncaptured fortresses in their rear, was daily becoming more and more critical, and it was evidently necessary either to advance and risk a battle, or retreat. The weather was growing worse and worse, and was wasting the Prussian ranks. The moment therefore seemed to Dumouriez, who was supported with all his power by Danton, to be a favourable one for commencing negotiations. The accidental capture of the King's private secretary, Lombard, opened the way. The negotiations continued for ten days, and were prolonged by Dumouriez as long as there was any hope of severing Prussia from the Austrian alliance. When the King had definitely declined to give up his ally, and the French Government had equally definitely declined—pro-

bably to Dumouriez's disappointment—to make any concessions in regard to the King, the negotiations were then skilfully prolonged by the Duke, in order to gain time to withdraw his army from a situation which was now recognised to be utterly untenable, owing to the weather and the dysentery raging in his camp.

The Duke showed extraordinary skill in carrying out the retreat which had now become necessary. The caution and circumspection which impaired his talents as the leader of a forward movement disappeared when, as now, he was forced to act and to act quickly.[1] But, as M. Chuquet points out, it was afterwards universally recognised that the Prussian army owed their escape even more to the skill of the Duke as a diplomatist than as a general.[2] How completely he deceived Dumouriez and Westermann into thinking that he was really treating seriously, when he was only flattering them in order from day to day to gain precious time for his sickly and diminishing forces to move a step backward, can only be realised by the readers of the account given in the 'Retraite de Brunswick' of this 'great enigma of the Revolution,' an enigma which had baffled every historian till Sybel indicated the explanation which M. Chuquet has completed and finally established. It was not till safely back on the right bank of the

[1] Chuquet, *Invasion Prussienne*, 123.
[2] Chuquet, *La Retraite de Brunswick*, 154.

Meuse, which, had it not been for his fatal want of determination, he would never have quitted, that the Duke showed his true hand and let the French generals understand that they had been nothing but dupes. 'Brunswick, pupil of Minerva as much as of Bellona, had succeeded in saving his army.'[1] But at the price of what sacrifices and of how much of his own military reputation! Nor were the disasters of the year yet over, for in October Custine crossed the Rhine near Philippsburg, and by a bold dash captured Mayence and Frankfurt, thereby compelling the immediate evacuation of the remaining territories and fortresses still held on the Meuse by the Duke. Meanwhile Dumouriez had transferred his energies to the northern frontier, had gained the great victory of Jemmappes, and was overrunning Belgium.

And yet, in the teeth of these disasters, the Allied Sovereigns continued their quarrels and rivalries. The King of Prussia demanded to be allowed to take a larger compensation out of Poland, if called upon to raise more than the 20,000 men originally stipulated and to enter on a second campaign against France. The Austrian proposals in regard to compensation in Bavaria and the Franconian Principalities he absolutely declined to

[1] Pirbeck, *Neue Bellona*, 1802, i. 161, quoted by Chuquet, *Retraite de Brunswick*, 182.

entertain. The Emperor Francis II. thereupon definitely threw over the last remnant of even the pretence of following in the steps of the Emperor Leopold. A change of Ministers took place at Vienna, which installed in power the unscrupulous Thugut, the statesman to whom Sybel, writing in 1867, said that France owed her victory in the Revolutionary War and Austria her position in Europe.[1] Thugut's whole energies were at once directed to securing a 'compensation' for his Imperial master in Germany if possible, as his predecessors in office had wished; but if that proved impossible, then in Alsace; and, failing everything else, in Poland itself.

Meanwhile France was about to enter on the career of aggression and conquest which did not finally terminate till 1815. But the King of Prussia, blind to the coming danger, and having now forgotten the original objects of the war, was all but entirely occupied in intricate negotiations for the enlargement of his own territories. He decided that the campaign of 1793 must be limited to clearing Germany of the invader, and that, above all things, his Austrian allies were to be prevented getting a firm footing in Alsace, which, if once it became theirs, might give them a preponderating power in Western Germany. The Duke, on the

[1] Sybel, *French Revolution*, ii. book vi. ch. vi.

other hand, believed that, if the war was extended to the expulsion of the French from the Netherlands and the protection of Holland from invasion, and if the Meuse fortresses and the valley of the Sarre were conquered, Prussia would be strong enough to hold her own against Austria when the final settlement came; and he wished to hit hard and end the war, in order to have a free hand as soon as possible in the east of Europe. As it was the evident intention of France to extend her borders, and as it was now clear that there was nothing to choose between the system of Louis XIV. and that of the Republic, he wished, notwithstanding his old French sympathies, to throw the utmost vigour into what had now become a struggle for the national defence of all Germany, as the Empire had declared war against France. He therefore intended to co-operate effectually with the Duke of Coburg in the Netherlands and with Wurmser on the Rhine. But these ideas did not suit the King and his Ministers, who wished to keep their army intact as far as possible for the conquest of Poland and a possible war with Austria, and were even inclined to negotiate with France, and to discuss territorial concessions to the Republic on the left bank of the Rhine.

Within the limits dictated by this policy the campaign of 1793 had to be conducted by the Duke.

From a purely military point of view the circumstances were not unfavourable. The King early in 1793 had left the headquarters of the army, and the disorganisation at headquarters in Paris greatly weakened the position of the French armies on the frontier. It was the time when Servan had quitted the War Office, and before Carnot controlled it; when Pache and Bouchotte were at the head of that department; when confusion and peculation reigned supreme; when the army which had conquered at Valmy and Jemmappes had been disorganised, and the army which was to conquer at Fleurus had not yet been formed; when Dumouriez had fled abroad; when Biron, Custine, Lückner, Houchard, Rochambeau, and Westermann were put on their trial and executed for imaginary offences; when Jourdan, Hoche, and Moreau had hardly been discovered; when the great cities of France were rising against the tyranny of the Commune of Paris and the Convention, and the Commune of Paris and the Convention were themselves engaged in internecine strife, and neither had as yet got the mastery.

Already before the end of the year 1792 the Duke had retaken Frankfurt. In April 1793 the French were driven out of the Rhenish Palatinate, and fell back on the lines of Weissenburg; Mayence was besieged and retaken on July 22. Landau alone remained in French hands, but was completely

blockaded: otherwise Germany was free of the invaders. The Austrians were equally successful in the Netherlands. The Duke now proposed to establish himself in a strong position on the heights of the Keltrich, near Pirmasens, with the main army, where he could stand between the French armies of the Moselle and the Rhine, 'so that he could roll up the former on the one side on his right wing, or turn the latter on the left wing of the lines of Weissenburg, by passing through the valley of the Lauter.'[1] All these operations were carried out with complete success. The army of the Moselle was entirely defeated, the Duke himself storming the heights of the Keltrich on August 13, and inflicting a bloody defeat upon the French at Pirmasens, when they endeavoured to recapture the position. On the 27th he announced to the King that 'now was the time for vigorous action; that the frontier would be crossed in two days' time; and that his position was so favourable that he should risk his military reputation by any longer inactivity;'[2] and he insisted that, if no advance was to take place, he should receive written orders to that effect to justify his inaction. The King decided that it was dangerous to conquer too much, because his Cabinet feared that a great success on the western frontier would

[1] *Sybel*, iii. book vii. ch. vi.

[2] *Massenbach*, i. 189–191. The document is printed in Appendix I. See too, Wagner, *Feldzug von* 1793, 146.

facilitate the Austrian designs, and the Duke had to remain in his position near Pirmasens. Owing to the utter disorder which had ensued after their defeat on the 16th, the French army was all but broken up ; but Prussian diplomacy intervened to save it, and the Duke was forbidden to follow up his victory, on the pretext that the Austrian plan of operations had not yet arrived.

On October 13 the lines of Weissenburg were taken by a joint operation, directed by Wurmser and the Duke, which could easily have brought about a complete rout of the enemy, if the Duke had not been expressly forbidden to do more than support Wurmser with 7,000 men in a turning operation, which military critics greatly admired for the skill with which it was carried out. The result of the campaign so far, however, was sufficiently ruinous to the French forces. Not a foot of German soil remained in their hands, except Landau ; the Duke of Coburg had driven the French out of the Netherlands, and half of France was in rebellion against the capital. The army looked forward to an invasion of France. But the army reckoned without its Sovereign.[1] The Duke had to tell the Prince of Hohenlohe that they were forbidden to take advantage of the opportunities which presented themselves. 'Think of me, Major,' he said after the battle of Pirmasens to Massenbach,

[1] *Sybel*, iii. book viii. ch. ii.

'on this occasion and of this hour, and recollect what I have the honour to tell you. We could have conquered France, but we are making her powerful, and we shall all go under.' And in after-life he constantly insisted that this had been the decisive moment for action, and that it had been lost through intrigues and political considerations.[1]

By the end of December 1793 the Jacobin rulers of France, who had been at the helm since the fall of the Gironde and the disappearance of the first Committee of Public Safety in July, had restored order at the War Office; and new generals, capable of directing the armies of the Republic in the field, were rapidly brought to the front by the stress of events. The dreaded volcano, as the Duke had foreseen, was producing the progeny nursed in the crater. At the Keltrich and Pirmasens he had only had to contend with Landremont and Carlenc, but more serious adversaries were about to appear. Pichegru was placed in command of the army of the Rhine opposite to Wurmser, and Hoche of the army of the Moselle opposite to the Duke; and, finally, in order to put an end to rivalries, the Committee of Public Safety gave the supreme command to Hoche. Meanwhile, as if in order to mark the contrast, the jealousies and political ill-will between the Courts of Berlin and Vienna daily grew worse, and were

[1] *Massenbach*, i. 197; ii. 39, 183, 184, 408.

reflected in the operations of their generals. The Duke recognised the increasing strength and vigour of the enemy, and he chose for his winter quarters a formidable position a little in the rear of that which he had hitherto so successfully occupied. Thither, by a series of feigned movements, he drew Hoche and invited an attack, which developed into the great three days' battle of Kaiserslautern, fought on November 28, 29, and 30. On the second day the Duke became the attacking party. The long struggle ended in the total defeat of Hoche. As Langeron observed, the Duke had now gained one of the finest battles ever fought by the Prussian army, but no pursuit was allowed.[1] The French army was quickly reorganised, and Hoche delivered the next blow, not at the Duke, but at Wurmser, against the exposed position of whose army the Duke had repeatedly but vainly protested, as well as against the unmethodical character of his operations. The Austrian army was narrowly saved from complete destruction. French writers have attributed Wurmser's escape mainly to the failure of General Donnadieu to carry out his orders, and to the thick fog which rose towards nightfall and confused their operations. But it was really saved by the operations of the Duke with his own army on the French left, and his splendid courage towards

[1] Chuquet, *Hoche et la Lutte pour l'Alsace*, ch. iv.

the end of the action, when he left his own army and seized the command of the disorganised right wing of the army of Wurmser.

'The Duke' (we quote M. Chuquet's account) 'throws himself in front of the Imperial troops. He rallies them; he drags them after him, and, to quote the words of a Prussian officer, "seems the incarnate god of war." The Austrians recover confidence and courage. "The Duke," the cry goes up among the officers, "is commanding us; all will go well;" and the soldiers are heard exclaiming, "To the devil with Wurmser; long live the Duke!" Colonel Köckeritz brings up twelve pieces of artillery, and with them Colonel Klenau. "Come," the Duke calls out to Klenau, "come and share our glory or our death." "Yes," Klenau replies, "and I shall have the happiness of fighting under the eye of the greatest of generals." . . . Thanks to Brunswick, to his presence of mind and activity, the Austrian army was able again to form up behind the Lauter. The Duke was a hero on the field of battle. He then seemed to be himself again. He was once more, as in his youth, ardent, handy, quick to seize every occasion, risking his own life and hazarding it in the thickest of the fight. As one of his bitterest critics observed, he would have done well to have been always on horseback, and never to have sat down to his desk, where his mind allowed itself to be invaded and ultimately to be dominated by the scruples suggested by his excessive circumspection.'[1]

But the Austrian army, though saved from destruction, was none the less defeated. On December 28 the siege of Landau had to be raised, while Bruns-

[1] Chuquet, *Hoche et la Lutte pour l'Alsace*, 190, and the authorities he there quotes.

wick drew off his army in perfect order to the neighbourhood of Mayence. Once more the Duke had to show his extraordinary ability in commanding a retreat. 'Hoche,' says Marshal Gouvion-St.-Cyr in the account he has left of this campaign, in which he took a distinguished part himself, 'notwithstanding his recent successes, was unable to gain the day over so skilful a general as was the Duke of Brunswick.'[1] Brunswick's retreat, said Langeron, who, as an *émigré*, bore the Duke no love, was 'the *chef d'œuvre* of that far more able than honest general.'[2]

Meanwhile the King of Prussia, though no longer in a position to interfere with the daily direction of his army in the field, had involved his country in the negotiations which ultimately led to a separate peace between Prussia and France. On January 9, 1794, the Duke, equally disgusted with the military and the political situation, conveyed his resignation in a letter to the King, in which he openly stigmatised the whole conduct of affairs.

'Suspicion, egotism, and the spirit of cabal,' he wrote, 'have in the two campaigns destroyed the results of every measure, and caused the failure of the projects concerted for the two armies. . . . The responsibility for the faults of others falls upon me. Prudence requires, honour

[1] *Mémoires sur les Campagnes des Armées du Rhin et de Rhin-Moselle de* 1792 *jusqu'à la Paix de Campo-Formio.* Par le Maréchal Gouvion-St.-Cyr, Paris, 1829, i. 200.

[2] Chuquet, *Hoche et la Lutte pour l'Alsace*, 238.

demands, resignation. When a great nation like the French is pushed on by the fear of punishment and by enthusiasm into great actions, a single will and but one principle ought to preside over the steps of the allies; but when, instead of this, each army acts by itself without fixed plan, without unity, without principle, and without method, the results are what have actually been seen at Dunkirk, in the raising of the siege of Maubeuge, in the sack of Lyons, in the destruction of Toulouse, and in the raising of the siege of Landau.'[1]

'Yonder,' said Massenbach, after taking leave of his general on the bridge at Mayence, 'goes the only man in Germany with the ability to save the country, and he refuses to do it.'[2] We have dwelt at some length on these events, as they explain why it was that the Duke's military reputation survived the campaign of 1792. The failure of that campaign was known to be due to the personal intervention of the King, and it was not want of military skill, but of moral determination, with which the Duke was reproached. Pirmasens and Kaiserslautern were real victories, and they restored confidence. The army still believed in him. They saw him like some ancient hero of German legend, as they thought, the victim of evil enchantments; but they believed he would yet shake himself free from the meshes which had been cast around him, and trample his enemies under foot.

[1] *Massenbach*, i. 366. The document is printed in Appendix II.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 259.

'The Duke at this time,' says Massenbach, 'was in the full vigour of life. . . . He was not only the best informed prince of his age, but his insight into affairs would have raised any private individual to an exalted station. He would never have been so unfortunate as he afterwards was if he had possessed self-confidence and had grasped the helm of the State. It must be a subject of eternal regret that he could never be induced to rise to the height of this idea. He recognised the necessity, but shrank back before the difficulties of carrying it out.' . . . 'He had only to desire it, and London, Vienna, and Berlin would have fulfilled his wishes. He had strength enough in himself to save Germany. That he would not exert that strength must be his eternal reproach.'[1]

In conversation with Lord Malmesbury the Duke distinctly attributed to the King all the troubles and misfortunes which had occurred. He was asked, on behalf of the British Government, and with the concurrence of the King of Prussia, if he would resume the command. 'Not if the King goes,' he replied. 'It is out of the question for me once more to expose myself to all the humiliations I have had to undergo. The King loses half the day in talking and eating; he is not aware that in war every moment is precious.' Prussia, he went on to declare, had no longer any system, and never would have one while the reign lasted. In strong language he described the vices and the weakness of the Cabinet, and the way they made their influence felt in the army. 'An army ought to be

[1] *Massenbach*, i. 234; ii. 114.

nothing but a machine ; directly it is anything else it becomes the instrument not of the protection, but of the destruction of the State.' . . . 'The late King knew how to change all this with a glance.'[1] Frederic William had placed him in an 'incredible position,' for he affected to be always waiting for a plan of campaign from the Emperor, and left his generals in the dilemma thereby created. During the siege of Mayence Lucchesini had said, 'When this is over we must do as little as possible, and leave the rest to the Austrians,' and he was believed to have suggested to the King, after the victory of Pirmasens, 'that the Duke knew perfectly well how to win battles ; only he took care to do so when his Majesty was absent :' an innuendo which fell on willing ears, as Frederic William had never forgiven the Duke for refusing to attack at Valmy and thereby depriving him, as he believed, of an opportunity of personally gaining eternal glory.[2]

Lord Malmesbury was at Brunswick in 1795, occupied in negotiating the marriage of Princess Caroline with the heir to the British crown, and also charged to ascertain if the Duke could be persuaded to take the command in Holland, now threatened with conquest owing to the divisions of the allies and the want of authority of the nominal

[1] *Malmesbury*, iii. 166, 167, 206. *Hardenberg*, ii. 247-249.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. 180. *Massenbach*, i. 195.

commander-in-chief, the Duke of York, who was emulating the former achievements of the Duke of Cumberland. Similar appeals reached the Duke from Moellendorff, who had succeeded him in the command on the Rhine. But he met all these appeals with a refusal. With the King he would not act; against his wish he dared not act. Under the existing conditions, he said, he could do nothing effectual, as there was no guarantee for unity in the command, and he declined any longer to be put in the pillory for the faults of others. He emphatically declined, after his experience in 1792, to be reduced to the position of a 'Marshal of the Court,' working by objections and criticisms, instead of being a real commander-in-chief and certain of obedience.

'An old man of sixty,' he wrote to Massenbach, 'would deserve to be the laughing-stock of his contemporaries if he took mists for realities, words for deeds, and war as nothing but the means of spending time agreeably for a few hot-heads, who seldom, if ever, know how to make their means correspond with their ends. With them foresight is timidity; knowledge of the ground and the rules of tactics mere pedantry. Disconnected undertakings, on the other hand, are regarded as the inspirations of genius and as heroic deeds. In such a state of affairs, to keep clear of self-contradictory undertakings is the only justification for the past and the only defence for the future.'[1]

As for the projected treaty and the proposed cession of the left bank of the Rhine, it would simply, he said, enable the French at an early date

[1] *Massenbach*, ii. 26, 35, 52, 58, 103, 134.

by one leap to reach the Weser and the lands of the Prussian crown. In the letters of Lord Malmesbury we trace how, nevertheless, the French party at Berlin, led by Prince Henry, gradually got the upper hand, and how the Duke all the time was struggling between conflicting emotions—on the one hand his hatred of the new policy, on the other his fear of alienating the Court of Berlin beyond hope of reconciliation. The Treaty of Bâle—'that predatory alliance,' as the British diplomatist termed it—was the ultimate result. Prussia stepped down from her high position among the nations. By one disgraceful set of transactions she had already extended her eastern frontier, but at the cost of bringing Russia on to the line of the Boug; by another she now abandoned her allies, and allowed France to dominate Western Germany from the left bank of the Rhine. Such was the net result of the abandonment of the policy of Pitt and Hertzberg in favour of that of Lucchesini and Haugwitz, of Lombard and Prince Henry. The loss of the buffer States, east and west, was, in the opinion of the Duke, fatal to Germany, and still more so to Prussia, as she had no natural frontiers, and had, therefore, to trust entirely to fortresses for the defence of her extended boundaries. Meanwhile, nothing had been done for the reform of the Constitution of the Empire, which, reeling under the heavy blows it

had received, seemed to be helplessly waiting for the hand of the executioner.[1]

The Duke remained in political retirement till the death of Frederic William II. in 1797 brought about a change. At the Court of Frederic William III. and Queen Louise the Duke resumed his influence, and once more found himself in the position which he had occupied in 1786, of being able to hold the helm of the State, if only he could be persuaded to act. All the old military reputations had been destroyed except his; and once more all eyes looked towards him. Some there might be, like Kalckreuth, between whom and the Duke there was a feud of long standing, who said that it was their belief that the Duke had been specially born for the destruction of Prussia. But they were the minority; and Kalckreuth was a universal critic and detractor.[2] The general belief was that there yet remained one man who in the hour of need might step forth to save Europe. The army of the Great Frederic existed, and the right hand of his later years was yet alive, with a reputation still high, and enveloped in a mystery which cast a curious and disconcerting glamour on friend and foe alike. In civil affairs his reputation had, if possible, increased by contrast with the fatuous conduct of

[1] *Hardenberg*, i. 282. *Malmesbury*, iii. 196–199.

[2] *Malmesbury*, iii. 155. Gentz, *Mémoires et Lettres Inédits*, 286. *Boyen*, i. 157.

the other minor princes of Germany. The plan of inducing him to go to France as a sort of Director-General to play the part afterwards enacted by Bonaparte was actually revived at this time by Sieyès. He was admittedly the wisest and most successful ruler in Europe. But he met every suggestion that he should insist on becoming a sort of High Constable, whether at Paris or at Berlin, with a refusal. 'Providence,' he said, 'has entrusted me with the government of a State of my own. I am the hereditary administrator of my people. That is the first duty I have to fulfil;' and from Brunswick and the Northern army, of which he had accepted the command, he refused to stir except under orders from the King.[1]

Such orders nearly came in 1799, when Suwarrow was driving the French out of Italy and the Archduke Charles, in the greatest of his campaigns, had been equally successful in Germany. The Duke was then of opinion that the moment was come for crushing the Power which in fighting ancient Europe seemed to have caught from the statesmen and kings whom it had overthrown the reckless greed for aggrandisement which distinguished the eighteenth century.[2] He wished to call upon France

[1] *Massenbach*, i. 229, 230. André Lebon, *L'Angleterre et l'Émigration Française*, Preface, xvii; Roederer, *Œuvres*, iii. 449.

[2] See the observations of M. Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, vol. i. book i. ch. i. section iii., 'La Raison d'Etat.' *Sybel*, ix. p. 145 (German edition).

to restore the independence of Holland and to evacuate the territory between the Rhine, the Meuse, and the Moselle. But the King, after much hesitation, eventually determined on peace, and the Duke as usual submitted.[1]

Two possible policies now existed for Prussia: either a frank opposition to France, which meant war, or the alliance which Napoleon professed to offer. Each required a strong will to carry out, but at Berlin no strong will existed. Neither policy was really pursued, and the ship of the State never followed a steady course for long together. The position of Prussia became more and more critical. Frederic William III. found himself in 1800 threatened with having to choose between an overt attack from the half-insane Emperor Paul and joining Russia in the Armed Neutrality against England. The latter meant a rupture with England. We find the Duke at this time busily engaged in a plan for the defence of the eastern frontier against a Russian attack, and under orders to occupy Hanover, if necessary, to prevent a French occupation. The assassination of the Emperor Paul only just warded off these dangers in time. Then came the occupation of Hanover in 1802 by France contrary to the terms of the Treaty of Bâle, and the tame

[1] *Life of Stein*, vol. i. ch. iv. *Massenbach*, iii. 88. *Hardenberg*, i. 406.

submission of the King, to whom the Duke again gave way, contrary to his own opinion.[1] But the internal dangers were even worse than those which threatened from beyond the borders, as the Treaty of Lunéville, followed by the Principal Resolutions of the Imperial Deputation of 1803, transformed the internal constitution of the Empire, abolished nearly all the Ecclesiastical States, and destroyed the Immediate Nobility of the Empire. Prussia and the Principality of Brunswick both, indeed, profited territorially by these arrangements; but the broad result was that while they destroyed the hegemony of Austria in Germany, they did not substitute that of Prussia. At such a juncture the burden of kingship would under any circumstances have been no easy charge, but unfortunately the private virtues of Frederic William III. were not equalled by any corresponding mental capacity. Prussia had no doubt thus far shared in the spoils, but the wiser heads saw that a struggle was none the less inevitable. The contest between the National and the French party at Berlin was continuous, and the advantage swayed now to one side, now to the other. An obstinate determination to preserve neutrality, arising more from a conscious sense of personal weakness than from any well-considered political plan, was the main characteristic of the

[1] *Massenbach*, iii. 441. *Hardenberg*, iii. 19, 93.

King. A nature so constituted naturally sought for reliance on some established reputation, and it was to the Duke that the King instinctively looked, but, unfortunately, looked in vain. The Duke would obey orders, but could give none. As usual, he was torn by contrary emotions, and listened to conflicting advice. Massenbach had joined the French party, and wished to enter frankly into an alliance with Napoleon, to be directed against Russia, which he declared was the robber of the earth, and against England, which he denounced as the pirate of the seas.[1] But the Duke, notwithstanding his old dislike and suspicion of Russia, considered France 'the true enemy and the origin of every trouble' since 1793.[2] In this conviction he was greatly strengthened by an influence which was now beginning to make itself felt in his inner circle at Brunswick.

When all is said and done, perhaps the best title to the gratitude of Germany which the Duke can claim is that through his keen appreciation of merit Scharnhorst first entered the Prussian service and rose to a high position. The Duke, while in command of the Army of Observation by which after the Treaty of Bâle the neutral territories within the line of demarcation marked out by that treaty were garrisoned, was brought into contact with

[1] *Massenbach*, ii. 61, 82–85. Memorandum entitled 'Ueber Preussens politische Lage im Anfange des 1799sten Jahres,' iii. 61.

[2] *Ibid.* ii. 35.

Scharnhorst, while still in the Hanoverian service, and tried to induce him to enter the Prussian army, but the offer at the time was refused. It was renewed, and finally accepted in 1801, when Scharnhorst began the career which brought about the reform of the Prussian army, first as one of the professors in the Military Academy at Berlin, where he was the colleague and rival of Massenbach, and afterwards as quartermaster-general of the north-western division of the Prussian army, commanded by the Duke himself; though it is true that the support given by the Duke to his plans of reform was characterised by his usual extreme circumspection, by hesitations and qualifications of every kind, and the difficulty complained of by Hardenberg many years before in plainly saying 'Yes' or 'No.'

The history of the campaign of 1806 has often been written, and it is beyond the scope of this study to do more than briefly to point out the salient points in it which illustrate the character of the Duke, and determine his share of the responsibility for the great disaster which overwhelmed the Prussian monarchy at Jena and Auerstädt, on the latter of which two stricken fields his own career terminated in death. By the end of 1804 he had made up his mind that the boundless ambition of the Emperor, and the arrogance of the French generals and diplomatists, made it a mere matter of time when

Prussia would have to enter the lists. There was yet another reason. The occupation of Hanover by France in 1802, in defiance of the terms of the Treaty of Bâle, brought the enemy into the immediate neighbourhood of his own Principality. The close connection of Brunswick with the Electorate made it only too probable that the seizure of the latter would, on the first convenient pretext, be made the excuse for some claim on the former, especially as the little State would evidently be a welcome addition to the realms of the new kinglets and princelings who were springing into existence under the wing of France. The districts in Western Germany belonging to Prussia were even more exposed to danger. The general staff of the Prussian army was now divided into three large divisions, of which the first was to occupy eastern, the second central, and the third north-western Germany, which was considered the certain seat of the coming war. On March 26, 1804, the Duke appointed Scharnhorst quartermaster-general of the north-western army, and assumed the active command himself. Scharnhorst now became the confidential adviser of the Duke, and his active hand may be traced throughout all the subsequent events. It is worth noting that, in one of the notes made at this period, Scharnhorst expresses his belief that the principal danger of the future would be that the Duke would be paralysed

by 'higher commands;' [1] for it became clear that the French party at Berlin, represented, since the death of Prince Henry, in the army by Kalckreuth and Massenbach, and in diplomacy by Haugwitz, was more active than ever, and was constantly engaged in thwarting those who recognised that the crisis was near, and that the only question open was that of time and opportunity. Kalckreuth also, 'that nature composed of nothing but spite and criticism,' [2] was busily engaged in throwing the weight of his high reputation into the scale against the plans of military reform advocated by Scharnhorst. Nor did he stand alone. The net result was that when the war at last came, the army, to quote Boyen's own words, was in that most dangerous of all conditions, that of being half reformed. 'New and old were mixed up together in variegated fashion, and the Prussian army was no longer an effective field force.' There was, above all, in Boyen's opinion, one terrible gap in the organisation. While the older men had had the experience of actual warfare, and the youngest had learnt the last lessons of modern military art in the Academy at Berlin, the great mass of the higher officers had neither experience nor knowledge, and their ignorance was only equalled by their conceit.[3]

[1] *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 345, 'höhere Instructionen.
[2] *Boyen*, i. 157.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 195, 199–218.

In 1805 Napoleon again attacked Austria; and France and Russia were simultaneously threatening to send their troops across Prussian territory; the one to assail, the other to defend Austria. The Duke was summoned to Berlin, and the 'Memoirs of Hardenberg' are once more the record of his inability to give a firm opinion. The opportunity of the war party at Berlin came when the French army deliberately violated the Prussian territory of Anspach. War was now regarded as certain; but with the aid of Russia as an ally. On October 24 the Duke took the command of the army, with Scharnhorst as chief of a staff almost entirely composed of the younger officers belonging to the new military school in which he had taught.[1] The French army under Bernadotte was at once called upon to evacuate Hanover. Napoleon, not thinking it convenient to bring a new enemy on himself, ordered Bernadotte to retreat on Hameln and evacuate the country before the advancing army of the Duke. The result was certainly a victory for Prussia, and the decision with which the whole affair had been conducted did much to restore moral as well as military confidence. Scharnhorst now implored the Duke that the general direction of the Prussian forces should not be too much to the north-west, as the French were advancing through the valley of

[1] *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 351.

the Danube, and it was there that the real struggle would be. Nor was there any difference so far between him and the Duke. 'In the warlike surroundings of his headquarters the Duke became another man. He was constantly complaining of the intolerable slowness of the march of the Prussian troops; he demanded the concentration of all the forces of the country, wherever they could be got from. With them,' he said, 'they must without delay fall upon the army of Napoleon, deprive it of the reputation of invincibility, and liberate Europe from the shame which it had endured for all those years. Already the persuasion was overmastering him that all their efforts might come too late.'[1] If Austria were to fall, he kept repeating, 'our turn will come next, and then those will be at last convinced who reckoned on France, and considered Prussia's separation from the common interests of Europe to be a happy event.' He sent a plan to Berlin, elaborated by Scharnhorst, for an advance to the south, so as to strike a blow at the French left flank, and cut off their communications, while leaving a sufficient force to watch Bernadotte at Hameln. But if such was the language of the Duke in his camp, he was unable to hold the same firm language at Berlin in the face of the King, who, while approving the plan of the Duke, was

[1] *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 355.

determined to maintain peace, if possible, at almost any price, and was supported by Haugwitz, Lombard, and Lucchesini.[1]

Amongst the officers of the staff at this time was Boyen. In his 'Memoirs' he describes his General as he appeared to him at the time:—

'The Duke of Brunswick,' he says, 'in his earlier military career had given fine evidences of personal decision and military foresight, and was certainly one of the best-informed princes and most worthy of honour who ever lived. Very few men can exist able to converse in so intellectual and also attractive a manner as this Prince knew how to do. His successful campaign in Holland, and some parts of his conduct of the campaign on the Rhine, had given him so considerable a reputation as a commander that the abortive undertaking in Champagne was not able to overcloud it. Great acquired military knowledge, both of the details and of the wider aspects of his profession, were united in him in an uncommon degree; and when you add to all this that he was also greatly to be respected in the government of his own Principality, which even in his old age, both through his own outward demeanour and the real activity of his conduct, made an excellent impression on all, nobody can fail to acknowledge that the portrait I have drawn, which is one true to life, presents to you a man who was no ordinary personality.'[2]

But, he continues, all these fine qualities were impaired and rendered well-nigh useless by serious failings: the failings of which we have already heard from other and no less friendly sources: the

[1] *Hardenberg*, ii. 338. [2] *Boyen*, i. 151

nervous dread of impairing his old reputation; an absurd attention to petty details, of which Boyen gives several amusing instances; and especially a total inability, as a rule, to assert himself against the King when their opinions differed, as they generally did. 'Was this the man,' Boyen asked himself, 'who could command successfully against Napoleon?' '*Nec coiere pares*' sums up the verdict of Lucan on the struggle which ended at Pharsalia. The whole of the celebrated passage in which the poet contrasts the youth and audacity of Cæsar with the self-conscious regard of the aged Pompeius for his own established fame might, indeed, be almost word for word applied to the rival leaders of the French and Prussian armies in 1805.[1] The peculiar failings of the Duke were now about to make themselves felt, as they had in 1792. At the royal command he had gone to Potsdam to take part in the negotiations with Russia for an armed mediation. There he first of all allowed himself to be persuaded that Napoleon would not dare to cross the Isar leaving the Tirol still unconquered on his right flank; then, when this anticipation turned out to be incorrect, he made a set of calculations, 'like a chess-player,' suggestive of the influence of Massenbach, the Mack of Prussia, as to the future development of the campaign, and told Haugwitz not to allow hostilities to

[1] *Pharsalia*, i. 120–157.

commence before December 15, because he did not wish to move his army southwards till the West Prussian regiments had arrived on the Elbe to replace them, and because he wanted to give full time to the Russian army to get into touch with the Austrians. He also apprehended an attack on North-Western Germany by the French army stationed in Holland, and wished to provide fully against it. But the Duke had not been able to include in his calculations the rash folly of the youthful Emperor Alexander, who, on December 2, contrary to the advice of his generals, forced on the battle of Austerlitz; nor the fact that Haugwitz not only deliberately wasted time on his journey to Vienna, whither, after the Treaty of Potsdam with Russia, he had gone as the bearer of the Prussian ultimatum, but also had secret instructions from the King, given apparently at the last moment, on no account whatever to allow war to take place.[1] Then followed the Treaty of Schoenbrunn and the disgraceful transactions in which Prussia, through Haugwitz, accepted Hanover as a bribe for an alliance with France, and thereby involved herself in a breach of faith which led England to declare war. This wretched display of weakness and crookedness only courted fresh affronts from

[1] Laforest to Talleyrand, January 5, 1806, French Archives, quoted in the *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 354. *Hardenberg*, i. 537, 540; ii. 268, 317–324, 336–343.

France, which began to treat Prussia as an already half-conquered province—affronts which in 1806 at last brought about the long-looked-for outbreak of hostilities.

The Treaty of Schoenbrunn had been signed by Haugwitz subject to various explanations of the articles, which were reserved by him for further consideration at Berlin. These modifications he had persuaded himself there would be no difficulty in inducing France to accept in the final treaty, which was to be ratified in Paris; although the battle of Austerlitz, followed as it had been by the practical surrender of Austria and the retirement of the Russian army within its own frontiers, had entirely altered the military situation. In a memorandum on the treaty the Duke pointed this out, and commented bitterly 'on the inconsistencies, the imprudence, and the total want of sagacity in the conduct of the Austrian and Russian army, which had produced the disastrous situation in which they now found themselves placed;' and he agreed with Hardenberg—who, like himself, was influenced by the desire of seeing the connection of Hanover with England severed—that the only course now open to Prussia was to accept the treaty subject to the qualifications, and to proceed at once to the discussion of it. But his own prognostications of the future were none the less gloomy, and though he spoke and wrote of the

possibility of Prussia still acting as the peaceful 'moderator of the inexhaustible effervescences of the extraordinary man whom the ceaseless faults of his adversaries, as much as his own ability, intelligence, and audacity, had raised to the outrageous power he now exercised over Europe,'[1] he in his heart evidently did not believe in matters having any but a warlike solution. It was under these circumstances that in January 1806, notwithstanding his old suspicion of Russia, he undertook a special mission to St. Petersburg: a mission which has remained celebrated, as the results, to quote the words of Sir John Seeley, 'cleared away ill-feeling, and paved the way to that friendly relation between the two Courts which lived on through all vicissitudes to the end of the European war, and was a principal cause of the overthrow of Napoleon;' for once away from the atmosphere at Berlin, the Duke was able to feel and inspire confidence.[2] The Duke had to explain the conduct of Haugwitz; and the conduct of Haugwitz was not easy to explain. He was instructed to say that the occupation of Hanover was the only means of preventing the Electorate becoming practically French territory, or being

[1] *Hardenberg*, v. 258, 'Denkschrift des Herzogs von Braunschweig' (printed in Appendix III.).

[2] Sir John Seeley, *Life of Stein*, i. ch. v. 'Göltz to Hardenberg, March 8, 1806,' printed in Appendix III., where some of the documents relating to this negotiation will be found.

handed over to an Austrian nominee as compensation; that there was no intention of maintaining an effective alliance with France, especially in the East—only a strict neutrality was intended, or at most a defensive arrangement; that neutrality was probably the best policy both for Russia and Prussia; and that it seemed to the King and his advisers that the continuance of a policy of determined hostility to France had resulted mainly in creating a commercial monopoly for England on the seas and the domination of Napoleon on the Continent. These official utterances met with scant favour at St. Petersburg, although the Emperor and his Court were prodigal in their manifestations of respect for their bearer, whom it was sought to distinguish from the Ministers whom he represented. The Duke, it cannot be doubted, really accepted the mission, not so much to explain a policy he detested, as in order to pave the way for joint military action, in view of the eventualities which he foresaw. The Emperor Alexander frankly told him that he could not approve the conduct of Prussia, and that war was none the less certain because of the final surrender made by Haugwitz in Paris, the news of which arrived while the Duke was still in St. Petersburg. 'The sword of the great Frederic will have yet to be drawn, and then,' said the Emperor, 'I shall serve under your orders, and it will be my

glory to learn the art of war in your school.' The Duke, now fully persuaded that a breach was inevitable with France, returned to Berlin with a proposal from the Emperor under which Prussia, in the event of further unsatisfactory conduct on the part of France, should be able to call on her Russian ally, and was to be entitled to the support of all the forces of the Empire. It was arranged that the further progress of this negotiation should be secretly entrusted to Hardenberg, who was then living in retirement from affairs, owing to the hostility of the French party at Berlin.[1] But the military question was evaded; and at the decisive moment, although the Duke realised, as his letters to Hardenberg show, the importance of a warlike concert, and although the Emperor Alexander invited him to draw up a plan of campaign, he declined while at St. Petersburg to go beyond the discussion of the political preliminaries, on the characteristic ground that he had as yet no definite instructions from Berlin. 'It will be necessary,' he, however, wrote to Hardenberg on his return, 'to work at a military concert with Russia. The King, however, has not given me any instructions. I do not know if General Rüchel has any orders on the subject.

[1] For an account of this negotiation see *Hardenberg*, i. 577–587; ii. 533–541; v. 278–294. As to the Duke's views on Hanover see *Hardenberg*, i. 510, 511, 563; ii. 195, 196; v. 164, 171.

The military concert will have to be preceded by a political concert, as there must be agreement in what cases and under what conditions the necessity will have to be accepted of facing the torrent. These eventualities should be provided for, and the means then estimated for supporting a struggle *for life and death.* The support which England might furnish us should also be credited to us, and it might be sent through Russia, so as to hide our game. Russia could take a hand in one or other of two ways: either by our summoning her to our help, or by her spontaneously taking the field for the deliverance of Germany and the conclusion of a peace which would emancipate the German nation from the tutelage of Napoleon. The Emperor Alexander would then play the part of Gustavus Adolphus. 'Such,' Hardenberg despairingly exclaimed as a comment on this letter—which was followed shortly after by another to the same effect—'such was the Duke! Why did he not speak his mind to the King? and why did not the King insist on going into these matters with him? Thus it was, and by such failings as these, that the ruin of the monarchy was brought about and accomplished!'[1]

On July 4 Hardenberg seized the opportunity of a visit to Brunswick by the diplomatist Alopæus, to urge these views strongly through him on the

[1] *Hardenberg*, ii. 570, 583; iii. 61.

Duke. 'I saw the Duke,' Alopæus wrote; 'we had a long conversation. He said everything that I could have wished, and was even profuse in his agreement with me. But for all that he will not move an inch.'[1] And meanwhile, as the Duke knew, the torrent was coming down.

It would appear certain that when at Berlin the Duke at least insisted on the desirability of Prussia not declaring war until the Russian army had had time to come up. He expressed the view that the Prussian army alone was not equal to the struggle. Of those on whom he would have to depend most as colleagues he had but a poor opinion. Moellendorff, he said, was a dotard; Rüchel, a vain-glorious boaster; Kalckreuth, a bilious critic of everything; and most of the generals of division were men of routine and without talent. 'Were these the men,' he asked, almost repeating the words of Boyen about himself, 'with whom he was to be called upon to fight and beat Napoleon?' The financial situation of Prussia also seemed to him desperate, and he now even revived his plan dating back to 1786, which had been incorporated in the Treaty of Potsdam by a separate and secret article, that Hanover might, with the consent of George III., become Prussian as part of a general European settlement which should include France. These timid coun-

[1] *Hardenberg*, iii. 58 67.

sels—as they seemed to the war party—led to a placard being attached to the back of his carriage, on his return journey to Brunswick from Berlin, with the words 'Prince of Peace' written upon it.[1]

Private grief came at this moment to darken the horizon. The Duke's eldest son had died childless on September 20; the second son was idiotic; the third was blind. There were the troubles in England in regard to Princess Caroline. The Duke was himself seventy-one years of age, and at any moment his own life might be endangered on the battlefield. It became necessary to obtain renunciations of their rights to the succession from his second and third sons, and to resettle them on the fourth son and his heirs. With this son the Duke's relations had not been happy, as the Prince shared few of his father's tastes and ideas, outside the military profession; and even in this was little more than a born fighter. Perhaps it was even a greater grief that Mlle. von Hartfeld, the accomplished lady, the Egeria of Brunswick, in whose society and that of Mme. Branconi, the object of Goethe's admiration also, the Duke had succeeded in finding some consolation for the vapidness of his own domestic circle, died on June 30.

[1] *Hardenberg*, ii. 585. Hausser, *Deutsche Geschichte*, 730. Beugnot, *Mémoires*, vol. i. ch. x.

In the summer of 1806 it was discovered that Napoleon, after having handed over Hanover to Prussia in 1805 to secure her neutrality, and having thereby involved her in war with England, was now proposing to hand back Hanover to King George, without even consulting Prussia, in order to secure peace for France with England, where Fox had come into office. War thus became certain, notwithstanding all the schemes of Haugwitz and Lucchesini to avert it, and the negotiations with Russia were therefore now rapidly pushed on.

Notwithstanding the protests of Hardenberg the army had, most unwisely, been demobilised on January 24. It was now again mobilised in great haste, and the Duke returned to his headquarters. He advised, 'as the most pressing necessity of the hour, that Prussia, Austria, and Russia, and, if these Powers could not do without the pecuniary support of England, that then they and England, too, should stand shoulder to shoulder. He begged that Prussia should try to obtain the alliance of her neighbours, but meanwhile should arm with all speed; then, "if the crisis came, far better would it be for the power, which under the great Frederic had withstood half the world in arms, to perish sword in hand than to bend the neck under a servile yoke." "Noble words," says the biographer of Scharnhorst, 'if only the Duke had known how to

translate them into realities. What an influence might he not have exercised—he who possessed the unlimited confidence of the King—on the misguided Court of Berlin, where, as acknowledged by a supporter of the existing system, an unexampled confusion prevailed, if he had had the self-reliance and strength of character to grasp the rudder!"' But, as he had too often before failed to be equal to the occasion, so he failed again now. He was ready to command the army, but not to create one; he could be an energetic and successful diplomatist, and in that capacity, though an old man, had just crossed Europe in the depth of winter, but to the level of the highest statesmanship, where, above all things, the quality of will is necessary, he failed to rise.[1]

The summer of 1806 was spent in efforts to put the country into a proper state of defence. Scharnhorst became more and more urgent that the military reforms in regard to the organisation of the army when actually in the field, which he had for years been urging on the Prussian War Office, should be adopted. A small portion of these, it has been seen, had been timidly taken up in earlier years. Now, though almost at the last minute, Scharnhorst's main idea, that of the formation of mixed divisions of infantry, light cavalry, and heavy

[1] *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 400.

cavalry, was adopted by the Duke, as well as the formation of a 'Bureau dé l'état major,' which was to exercise a general control throughout the army, and see that the orders of the Commander-in-Chief were obeyed.[1] But these reforms, valuable as they were at the moment, and still more fruitful for future use, were introduced too late; and they had, in addition, the disadvantage that they excited the utmost indignation in the already soured mind of Kalckreuth, and were resented by the Prince of Hohenlohe, who commanded one of the divisions of the army and aspired to the chief command.

The Duke's real desire was to concentrate on the line of the Elbe, and there await the arrival of the Russian army.[2] But he once more allowed himself to be overruled, this time by the clamour of the war party, and it was determined to move forward without waiting for the Russian army.

On August 22, at the royal command, the Duke sent from Brunswick to the King a plan of operations prepared by Scharnhorst, with the assistance of Rüchel and Phull, under his own superintendence. This scheme insisted that the Prussian armies should, above all things, not be divided; and that no time should be lost in assuming the offensive against the scattered French forces, which were still on the right bank of the Rhine or in Bavaria, before they

[1] *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 411–12. [2] *Hardenberg*, ii. 584–587.

could concentrate and be joined by reinforcements. So great was the reputation of the Duke that the contents of this memorandum, which bore his signature, were transferred almost word for word into a royal Cabinet order on the 27th.[1] The only alteration worthy of mention was one which the modesty of the King dictated. He named the Duke generalissimo instead of acting in that capacity himself. But a few days after the King allowed himself, under the influence of the Prince of Hohenlohe and the officers who surrounded him, to be persuaded into altering this plan, and to consent to amendments which struck at the root idea, viz. the concentration under one hand of the whole army in a commanding situation. Naumbourg-on-the-Saale had been named as the place, as thence the army could move either right by Weimar, Erfurt, and Gotha, or left by Zeitz, Altenburg, and Penig, according to circumstances. And now once more the moral weakness of the Duke made itself felt. Instead of declining to take the command under the altered conditions, he accepted the royal amendments. The Prince of Hohenlohe thus obtained the wish of his heart, as under the amended plan the Prussian army was to be split up into three large divisions, with commands for General Rüchel and the Prince, and a nominal subordination only to the Duke.

[1] *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 403.

Early in September Hardenberg was able to inform the Duke of the final success of the negotiations begun by him in St. Petersburg, and that an alliance was formed with Russia. He received the following disheartening reply; it was the last letter which ever reached him from his old chief, and was written from headquarters at Halle:—

'I am greatly obliged to you for the good news you send. May Heaven decide that unity should govern our affairs; and that we should undertake nothing which we cannot carry through, and that all the means of swift and energetic action be obtained. Let the mistake be especially avoided of imagining that this affair is going to be a short business. Far from it; and without measures for obtaining pecuniary resources great embarrassments may result from it. In my own particular case I devoted myself to it with all my heart; but to secure success all parties must combine, and when a man is not master of the means, much less can he be master of the results.'[1]

Meanwhile precious time had been lost in differences of opinion, and only on September 22 was Scharnhorst able to join the Duke at Naumbourg as chief of the staff and feel that things were really going to begin. A renewed struggle then took place, for the Duke, with characteristic pertinacity, was now returning by bypaths to his old and far wiser plan of concentration; and in this he ultimately prevailed. The Prince of Hohenlohe then proposed to advance by the left, as this would

[1] *Hardenberg*, iii. 143.

have given the leading position to himself. This plan was devised by Massenbach, whom he had appointed chief of the staff. The plan adopted by the Duke, on the advice of Scharnhorst, was, on the contrary, to advance on his right, to hold the highlands of the Thuringian Forest, and thence deliver a crushing flank attack on the advancing French forces, according as their advance was made from the north or the south, which as yet was uncertain. No less an authority than Clausewitz has said that, if this plan had been carried out then and there, the Prussian army could not have failed to drive the French over the Rhine.[1] But at this moment, on September 23, the King joined the headquarters of the army at Naumbourg, and a repetition of 1792 at once began. From the moment of his arrival all unity in the command of the army was gone. Nobody really knew who was supreme. 'Are the headquarters to be called royal or ducal?' Scharnhorst wrote to his daughter; 'I know not.'[2] The result was seen in endless conferences and loss of time. Nor was the confusion diminished by the appearance of the Queen at the side of her consort, with a numerous retinue of ladies and attendants. The royal presence, indeed, might have been specially devised to give a fatal

[1] *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 415.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 416.

development to the natural tendency of the Duke to hesitate. When he spoke of the plan of campaign he now began, as in 1792, to refer to himself more as a critic than as a commander. Success, he told Gentz, was possible on condition that no great mistakes were made. 'But it is upon you,' replied Gentz, 'that we rely to prevent them.'[1]

On the 25th the King at last ratified the adoption of the Duke's proposals; but the moment the military situation was clear political difficulties arose to create further delays. The punctilious desire of the King to throw the blame of the actual commencement of hostilities on France caused him to decline to permit a forward movement till the final reply of Napoleon to the royal ultimatum had been received. The precious days between September 25 and October 7 were thus lost.[2] Those days Napoleon employed in pouring his army across Germany. On September 28 he was at Mainz. On October 9 he had captured Coburg. Meanwhile nothing but endless conferences were proceeding at the royal headquarters. By the 7th it was not only clear that Napoleon was halfway across Germany, but that the opportunity of attacking and outflanking the advancing French force was almost gone.

A final council of war was held at Erfurt on

[1] Gentz, *Mémoires et Lettres Inédits*, p. 293.
[2] *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 423-4.

October 5, and it continued to sit for two days. Boyen has left a sad description of the effect of these perpetual councils, and of the consequent loss of authority by the Duke, whose mind for a moment seems to have been almost unhinged by the wranglings of Massenbach and his supporters and the constant ill-will of Kalckreuth. It soon began to leak out that strong divisions of opinion existed. On one occasion the disputes between the generals became so loud and indecent that they could be distinctly heard by the officers of the staff at dinner in the adjoining room.[1] It would seem that in all these discussions the Duke hardly ever failed to take the correct view of the military situation, but was never able to say a round 'No' to the foolish alternatives proposed. The result was seen in the puerile compromises adopted at a moment when definite action was a matter of life and death. Hohenlohe was thereby finally enabled, by an interpretation placed on the resolutions of the council of war, to begin to cross the Thuringian Saale with his army to the right bank, rashly throwing part of it forward to Saalfeld. A fatal blow was thus struck at the governing conception of the Duke and Scharnhorst, that the Prussian army was not to be divided. Meanwhile the rest of the army moved, under the Duke, to form a camp at

[1] *Boyen*, i. 156.

Hochdorf and Blankenhaym, intending thence to move forward according to circumstances.[1] The result was that on the 10th—by which time Napoleon's reply had been received—the advanced guard of the Prince of Hohenlohe's army was defeated at Saalfeld, and Prince Louis of Prussia, the hope of the military party, was killed in action. Kalckreuth's party then sent a memorial to the King, asking that the Duke should be relieved of his command: an unheard-of proceeding in the Prussian army, and contrary to every notion of discipline. But worse was to follow. While Hohenlohe had pushed forward his army in the dangerous manner just described, he at the same time had failed to carry out that portion of the Duke's orders which directed him to observe the great road from Nuremberg, passing through Gera and Hof, to Naumbourg. These orders were given in order that, if a French division attempted to turn the Prussian left, it should meet with resistance, and the news be brought at once to the Duke. It was not yet clear at the Prussian headquarters if the French advance would be supported by a turning movement on the Prussian right or the Prussian left, or possibly on both. That one or other would be attempted was considered certain. The task of watching the road had been entrusted to General

[1] *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 428.

Tauenzien, whose failure to carry out his orders has been the object of as much adverse comment as the failure of General Grouchy to arrive in time at Waterloo.

An absolute identity of purpose had hitherto existed between the Duke and Scharnhorst; but now differences arose. When the news of the disaster of Saalfeld arrived, it would seem that Scharnhorst was still in favour of offensive operations against the French left, and did not consider it was too late. The Duke, on the other hand, determined on forming a fortified camp at Weimar, supported on the right by Rüchel, who was at Gotha, and on the left by Hohenlohe, who received peremptory orders not to allow his army to get out of touch with the Prussian centre commanded by the Duke. Scharnhorst at the same time admitted that strong arguments did exist for this plan; failing his own, it was the best. Preparations with this object had been actually commenced when, on the night of the 12th, the news arrived like a thunderclap that Marshal Davoust had got past Tauenzien, unknown to that general, and had seized Naumbourg. Naumbourg lay in the rear of the Prussian army, and was the base for provisioning it; indeed, as already seen, the Duke had himself selected it in his original plan as the pivot of all his military operations. The Duke on the news of this disaster determined,

contrary still to Scharnhorst's opinion, on retiring in haste with his whole army along the road from Weimar to Merseburg, on the Lower Saale, where he could join the reserve forces of the Prince of Würtemberg, and either fight a pitched battle at once or retreat behind the almost impregnable line of the Elbe, and hold it till the Russian army could arrive—the course which Sir Edward Hamley considers was that which ought to have been followed from the beginning of the war.[1] With this view it was decided to follow the road from Weimar to Auerstädt, which, joining the road from Naumbourg near Hassenhausen, leaves Naumbourg on the right and, passing through the defile of Kösen, eventually reaches the river Unstrut. It was the intention of the Duke then to cross the Unstrut, and so reach Merseburg-on-the-Saale and join his reserves. Hohenlohe's army was ordered to avoid fighting a pitched battle, but to protect the retreat and then follow. But here again precious time was lost in a council of war, at a time when minutes counted. At last, when the Duke got his way, the movement of retreat was executed with a skill which excited the admiration of so competent a critic as General Rapp.[2] But when the neighbourhood of Hassenhausen was reached, at an early hour on the morn-

[1] *Operations of War.* 'On the Campaign of 1806.'
[2] *Boyen*, i. 160. *Mémoires du Général Rapp*, p. 80.

ing of the 14th, Davoust's army, it was found, had already crossed the Saale from Naumbourg, had occupied the pass of Kösen, and was entering the village of Hassenhausen in the dense fog of the autumn morning, just as the Prussian vanguard under Blücher were feeling their way into it under similar difficulties.

The night had been spent by the Duke among his principal officers. Marshal Moellendorff and Colonel Kleist supped with him; but he ate little and was seen to be pensive. 'Who knows,' he said, 'where we shall all of us be to-morrow?' Then he suddenly observed: 'The 14th of October has always been an unlucky date in my family.' He retired at midnight, and slept in full uniform, in his boots, and with his orders on. He rose at three, and at five mounted his horse.[1] 'In battle,' says the Prussian general Valentini, 'the Duke was always a genuine "hero." He bore the most extreme fatigue with as much courage as the humblest private soldier of his army; and he was now seen at the age of seventy-one years displaying a marvellous activity and sleeping in his clothes on the field of battle, only allowing a few moments to sleep, and rising at the break of day.'[2] At this moment Boyen

[1] These particulars and others which follow are taken from some notes in the article in the *Biographie Universelle* (new edition), by an eyewitness.

[2] Valentini, 75, *Galerie des Caractères Prussiens. Massenbach*,

arrived. He had been sent the day before with the Duke's final orders to the Prince of Hohenlohe to protect the retreat and to hold strongly the bridges over the Saale at Lobstädt and Dornburg, in order to prevent Bernadotte, who was near Cambourg, making a flank attack. Boyen returned in the early hours of the morning, just as the Duke was mounting his horse. On seeing him the Duke dismounted, seized him by the arm in friendly fashion, and rushed up the stairs with him to the King's apartment at such a pace that Boyen could hardly keep step, and could only wonder at his wonderful physical vitality. The Duke had advised that the attack should be deferred till the fog rose; but the aged Moellendorff now said that under similar circumstances he remembered how Winterfeld had told Frederic the Great that 'the eggs were only the better for being fresh,' and as this reminiscence of the aged veteran coincided with the wishes of the fiery Blücher, the advanced guard plunged into the fog, and met with a severe check. After this disastrous commencement further operations were deferred. 'The Duke as soon as the fog began to clear'—we are quoting Boyen's narrative—'occupied himself with the greatest activity in getting an idea of the ground and of the

1. 171. Chuquet, *Invasion Prussienne*, p. 123. The 14th of October was the date of the defeat of Frederick the Great by Marshal Daun at Hochkirken in 1758. One of the brothers of the Duke was killed there.

direction of the enemy's march ; and I must acknowledge—for it is only the truth—that he showed a resolution which in the days preceding the battle he seemed to have lost. The roar of the cannon restored his soldierly bearing to the ancient warrior. I have more than once had occasion to observe, in the case of men of unquestioned bravery, that they have shown a want of self-command before the fight began, but directly they enter the circle of real danger they once more find in their bosom their old manly self-reliance. The struggle between the sense of duty and mental anxiety is over, and honour wins the day.'[1]

The Duke had entrusted the attack on the left wing to the leadership of Scharnhorst, but he intended the principal attack to be on the right. His plan was to seize some low hills which on that side commanded Hassenhausen. He fixed his glance firmly on these heights as he rode with Boyen by his side. 'Yonder,' he exclaimed, pointing with his hand, 'is the key to victory; if we can once occupy those heights with infantry, victory is ours;' and he gave orders to Boyen to ride up to the advancing divisions and give them the required direction. 'Send there all the troops you can, wherever you find them.' Boyen rode off to carry out these orders. The Duke then put himself,

[1] *Boyen*, 165.

with his usual disregard of personal danger, at the head of the attack on the centre of the village. The mist rose, and in the light of the October morning the French position became visible. The military dispositions of the Duke by midday were proving entirely successful. The French army, though outnumbered, offered indeed a splendid resistance ; but their loss was enormous, as Marshal Davoust's report proves.[1] Scharnhorst's attack on the left was steadily gaining ground, and the heights on the right were being successfully occupied, when suddenly the Duke was severely wounded. Toulongeon, one of Napoleon's generals, says that the Duke in former campaigns had always been too ready to play the part of a simple soldier if the moment seemed to require it. On more than one occasion he had been known to advance alone, or almost alone, to the very edge of the position of the enemy ; and he now paid the penalty with his life for his almost reckless bravery. He had sent all his orderly officers on various missions, and had placed himself at the head of the Grenadiers of Hamstein, in front of the village of Hassenhausen, to encourage them, when a shot traversed his nose, grazing both his eyes and blinding him. He fell on to a heap of stones, but succeeded in remounting

[1] This report has recently been published : 'Opérations du troisième corps 1806–1807. Rapport du Maréchal Davout, publié par son neveu, le Général Davout, duc d' Auerstadt.' Paris, 1896.

his horse, a private soldier supporting him. In this state, with his face covered with a handkerchief, he was seen riding along the different divisions of the army. But he was soon obliged to give up the effort, and, accompanied by the celebrated surgeon Folger, had to leave the field of battle in a litter.

Boyen had just returned from executing his orders, and Scharnhorst had sent to ask for more cavalry on the left in order to complete the French discomfiture on that side, when the fatal event took place. General confusion at once arose. It sounds almost incredible, but the King could neither be induced to take the active command himself nor to give it to anybody else. The army practically broke up into separate divisions, and all unity of action ceased. The sequel is too well known to need repetition.

'At Auerstädt,' says Boyen, 'it required real skill to lose the battle. Everything was peculiarly to our advantage. If only we used our means properly the corps of Marshal Davoust must have been annihilated. The Duke appeared to intend to make a comparatively weak attack by the left and to strike heavily on the right. Although the opposite would, in my opinion, have been the better course, nevertheless I am convinced that if the Duke had not been wounded victory was ours on that line of action equally with the other, for numbers and the character of the ground, all, as already stated, was favourable to us, if only unity of command had been maintained.' [1]

[1] *Boyen*, i. 197. See too, *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 438. Lord Holland (*Memoirs of the Whig Party*, ii. 23), writing apparently from the

Marshal Kalckreuth meanwhile was on the heights of Eckartsberga, within hearing—nay, within sight—of the battle; but profiting by a literal interpretation of his instructions, he looked down at the battle raging at his 'feet under the lead of the hated "Brunswicker," with his "Hanoverian" chief of the staff, "as if it was all a theatrical piece with which he had no concern."' 'Our defeat,' says Boyen, 'was written in the Book of Fate, but, none the less, Marshal Kalckreuth, who considered himself a great general, and sneered at everybody else, committed a very grave error.'[1] The author of the 'Life of Scharnhorst' compares his conduct to that of the Genoese when, from the summit of the Tower of Galata, they looked down unconcerned on the capture of Constantinople by the Turks.[2] It is remarkable that Davoust always considered that the danger of destruction which he so narrowly escaped was largely caused by conduct on the part of Bernadotte similar to that of Kalckreuth. Bernadotte also justified himself by a literal construction of his instructions. He remained at Dornburg-on-the-Saale, instead of marching to the assistance of Davoust at Naumbourg, although he

information of an eyewitness, speaks of 'the skill and decision, the courage and generalship,' displayed by the Duke on the field of battle, and contrasts them with 'the folly and irresolution' of his previous movements.

[1] *Boyen*, i. 197, 198. Gentz, *Mémoires et Lettres Inédits*, 231, 330.

[2] *Scharnhorst*, i. 438. *Hardenberg*, iii. 204.

could distinctly hear the noise of the action, and left his brother-marshal to get out of his difficult situation as best he could. Meanwhile, and on the same day, Napoleon had destroyed the army of the Prince of Hohenlohe at Jena, and the rout was complete.

The death of the Duke had caused the defeat at Auerstädt. Equally fatal was his disappearance to the conduct of the retreat when the battle had been lost. 'His death,' says Massenbach, 'at this moment was, notwithstanding all the failings of this unfortunate commander, a great loss. He still represented the unity of command. Danger always doubled his courage. The Duke would have once more restored order into the whole. In former years I had had occasion to admire him on the retreats from Champagne and Alsace. With a strong hand he kept everything together. Everybody obeyed him. He imposed obedience on all. He was the kernel round which everything gathered. In the hour of disaster the Duke was a great man.'[1]

He was withdrawn from the field of battle in a

[1] Massenbach, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 11. This work is one of a series of writings which Massenbach published to justify his own conduct and that of the Prince of Hohenlohe, and to explain the surrender of their army at Prentzlau. A list of these writings will be found in vol. i. p. 533 of the *Life of Scharnhorst*. M. Lehmann points out that in regard to the facts of the campaign historians had hitherto trusted a great deal too much to Massenbach's statements, to which the *Recollections of General von Boyen* are a useful corrective. The most complete account of the campaign from a military point of view is to be found in Höpfner, *Feldzug von* 1806, vol. i.

pitiable condition, but he decided to undertake the journey to Brunswick over the Hartz that same night. Not a complaint escaped him, not a word unworthy of himself. He said to Folger: 'I shall always be blind. Well, at my age that is not so bad after all.' At Brunswick his Ministers entreated him not to remain, since the French would be there in four-and-twenty hours. 'That is rather soon,' replied the Duke, 'but what is the good of flying from them?' 'Your Highness does not know what he is exposing himself to.' There were rumours of the personal fury of the conqueror against the Duke. 'I will tell you,' replied the Duke; 'I have long known the French, and better than you do. They will respect an old general wounded on the field of battle. The officers will give balls and go to the theatre; the soldiers will kiss the girls a little. Take care of the billets, and see that they want nothing. I feel sure that there is a courier of the Emperor's on the road to know how I am.' *Non erat his tempus* is the observation of Beugnot, whose narrative we quote. The day of the Chevalier d'Assas and of the Count de Gisors, of the chivalry and courtesies of war, was over. The Duke only yielded on being told by Wolfradt, his old chief of the staff of 1793, that his presence at Brunswick would be a pretext for aggravating the horrors of a military occupation. Then he con-

sented to be carried elsewhere. 'I feel,' he said, 'I am too weak to bear a long journey, but if my presence here is likely to add to the misfortunes of my subjects I must leave the place, and I hesitate no longer.'[1] It was determined to remove him over the Lüneburger Heide to Hamburg, under the idea that he might thence be conveyed to England. Before leaving he sent a message recommending his family and his subjects to the mercy of the conqueror. The reply was a proclamation in the official 'Gazette' at Berlin, of which Napoleon was now in possession :—

'What would the Duke say,' so it ran, 'if I made the town of Brunswick suffer the destruction with which, fifteen years ago, he threatened the capital of the great people whom I rule over? The Duke of Brunswick had disavowed the insensate manifesto of 1792.[2] It might have been believed that with advancing years reason would have begun to triumph over passion; and yet once more he has come and lent the authority of his name to the follies of a giddy younger generation, which have destroyed Prussia. It was for him to make the women and the courtiers and the young officers find their proper place, and to impose on all the authority of his age, his well-informed mind, and his high position. He was not strong enough to do this, and the Prussian Monarchy is overthrown, and the State of Brunswick is in my possession. Tell "General Brunswick" that he will have the respect due to an officer; but I decline to recognise a sovereign prince in a general of the Prussian army.'[3]

[1] *Beugnot*, i. ch. x. [2] See p. 57 *supra*.

[3] *Mémoires du Général Rapp*, pp. 94–97, which contains the full

So the decree went forth for the incorporation of the little State in the Confederation of the Rhine; but before it could reach the Duke he was beyond praise or blame. He at first bore the northward journey well, showing the most extraordinary physical strength, notwithstanding the intensity of his sufferings. 'If God,' he said, 'will leave me but one of my eyes, I shall be satisfied.' But on the second day of the journey a violent inflammation attacked the wound, and his brain became affected. In this condition he arrived on the 29th at Ottensen, near Altona. 'His entrance into that city,' says Bourrienne, 'afforded a striking example of the vicissitudes of fortune. He was on a wretched litter, borne by ten men, without officers, without domestics, followed by a troop of vagabonds and children, who were drawn together by curiosity. He was lodged in a miserable inn, and was so worn out by fatigue and the pain of his eyes that on the day after his arrival a report of his death very generally prevailed. He declined to receive visitors, and expired on the 10th of the month,' in the arms of Colonel Metzner.[1] He was buried at Ottensen, in the same graveyard as Klopstock, who had

text. The version in Thiers, *Consulat et Empire*, vii. livre xxv. p. 177, is inaccurate.

[1] Bourrienne, *Mémoires*, vol. iii. 356. Some details will be found in an article, 'Recollections of a Black Brunswicker,' in *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. lxxvii. 452.

died shortly before in 1804: Klopstock, who had called on him to resign his command in 1792. There, too, shortly after were laid the victims of Davoust's brutal tyranny in Hamburg, whose flight was in the winter. The place became the pilgrimage of patriotic Germans in the years of oppression and tyranny which followed 1806, and is celebrated in Rückert's patriotic verse.[1]

'The Duke of Brunswick,' Lord Malmesbury wrote from England, 'is, of course, *being dead*, said to be the planner of this battle and the cause of its loss. This I do not credit, as, whatever faults he had, his military science and personal courage were most extraordinary.'[2] Nations forgive much to those who perish in battle; and, notwithstanding the fatal want of will or of ambition—call it which we may—of the man whom Stein described as the Suetonius Paulinus of his time, Germany has remembered the merits, rather than the failings, of the Duke. Too frequently, no doubt, he had been found to be 'naturally prone to delay' when rapid action was desirable, and had preferred 'cautious counsels' when bolder measures were required by the situation, and thought it wise 'to calculate

[1] *Gesammelte Lieder von Friedrich Rückert*, vol. iii. pp. 275–81, 'Die Gräber zu Ottensen.'

[2] Malmesbury, *Memoirs*, iv. 365, who mentions a curious report, current at the time, that the Duke was shot by a treacherous hand; but there is no foundation for the story, which is not even mentioned in the German authorities.

chances' rather than to trust to fortune; but all this was forgiven, because not only had he in peace proved himself one of the wisest and most liberal rulers of the time, but also, and mainly, because he fell for his country on the field of battle, sword in hand, in the time of need, and thus justified the early judgment of his royal uncle, that Nature had destined him for a hero.[1]

[1] 'Cunctator naturâ, cui cauta potius consilia cum ratione quam prospera ex casu placerent' (Tacitus, *Histories*, ii. 25). See *Life of Scharnhorst*, i. 305.

APPENDIX

I

SCHREIBEN DES HERZOGS VON BRAUNSCHWEIG AN DEN KÖNIGL. PREUSSISCHEN OBRISTEN UND GENERAL-ADJUTANTEN MANNSTEIN D.D. PIRMASENS DEN 27. AUGUST 1793.[1]

DER FEIND macht allerhand Versuche auf unsere Vorposten; die Kontrelection ist, ihm auf den Hals zu gehen. Dieses kann aber nicht anders, als durch zwei Märsche geschehen, wovon der leztere schon im Lothringischen ist. Verbieten politische Rücksichten alle Offensiv-Bewegungen in diesem Augenblick, wo sicherlich dem Feinde Abbruch zugefüget werden könnte: so ersuche zu meiner Legitimation, und um mich selbst in den Augen der Armee zu dekken, von S^r^ Majestät dem Könige mir eine ostensible Ordre zu verschaffen: 'dass bis auf weitere Ordre die sämtlichen, diesseits dem Voghesischen Gebirge postirten Korps der Königl. Preuss. Armee, keine Offensiv-Bewegung gegen den Feind machen und die Grenzen überschreiten sollen.'

Dieses allein kann mich ausser aller Verantwortung setzen; sonsten sehe ich mich zum Voraus der beissendsten Kritik ausgesezt. Ich erwarte mit Verlangen Antwort über diesen für mich sehr wichtigen Punkt.

[1] These documents are to be found in Massenbach, *Memoiren*, vol. i. pp. 189-191.

ANTWORT DES OBRISTEN VON MANSTEIN D.D. EDENKOBEN, DEN 28. AUGUST 1793.

Ewr. Durchlaucht werden aus dem von Sr. König. Majestät zu erhaltenden Kopien des Rapports vom General von Wurmser und der Königl. Antwort, die eigentlichen Ursachen ersehen, weshalb des Königs Majestät in diesem Augenblick keine Offensiv-Bewegung zu machen, intentionirt sind, um nämlich hiedurch dem zu erwartenden Operationsplane des Wiener Hofes nicht etwan entgegen zu handeln.

KABINETSCHREIBEN SR KÖNIGL. MAJESTÄT VON PREUSSEN AN DEN HERZOG VON BRAUNSCHWEIG, D.D. EDENKOBEN, DEN 28. AUGUST 1793.

Ewr. Durchl. nehme ich nicht Umgang, den zulezt eingegangenen Rapport des Generals Grafen von Wurmser anliegend mitzutheilen, und wenn gleich aus selbigem nicht erhellet, wie stark der Verlust ist, den die K.K. Truppen erlitten haben, so ist doch anderweit bekannt geworden, dass er nicht unbeträchtlich gewesen. Da bei dem Allen der Graf von Wurmser sich immer noch im Bienenwalde zu halten, und sich über Neuberg, Hagenbach, Bichelberg, Frekkenfeld nach Billikem zu extendiren gedenkt: so habe Ich nicht umhin gekonnt, die gleichmässig abschriftlich angebogene Antwort an ihn zu erlassen. Ewr. Ex: werden daraus des Mehreren entnehmen, dass von Seiten des Wiener Hofes ein Operationsplan erwartet wird, und da Mein Wille dahin gerichtet ist, nach den Wünschen des Wiener-Hofes, in den militairischen Operationen zu Werke zu gehen: so wird es jezt am allerbesten sein, unserer Seits nur Deutschland soweitmöglich gegen alle Invasionen des Feindes zu dekken, und so die Decision des Wiener Hofes abzuwarten.

FRIEDRICH WILHELM.

II

COPIE D'UNE LETTRE ÉCRITE PAR LE DUC DE BRUNSWICK AU ROI DE PRUSSE EN DATE DU 6 JANVIER, 1794.[1]

Sire!—Je suis pénétré de la plus respectueuse reconnoissance de tout ce qu'Elle daigne me dire. Mes rapports auront prouvé à Votre Majesté que j'ai eu le bonheur de rencontrer ses hautes intentions. Elle daignera se convaincre que rien ne me tient plus au cœur.

La crainte d'ennuyer V.M. de quelques détails qui me sont personnels, m'engage de joindre içi un Mémoire, et je la conjure de le lire avec bonté.

J'en appelle à la justice et la droiture des sentimens de V.M. qui font le bonheur de ses peuples, si Elle peut blâmer ma démarche, et s'il ne doit m'importer très essentiellement de mettre mon honneur à couvert.

(Signé) CHARLES W DUC DE BRUNSWICK LÜNEBURG.

à oppenheim le 6 Janvier 1794.

MÉMOIRE ENVOYÉ À SA MAJESTÉ LE ROI, D'OPPENHEIM, DU 6 JANVIER 1794.[2]

Les motifs, Sire, qui me forçent à demander mon rappel de l'armée, sont fondés sur l'expérience malheureuse que j'ai faite: que le manque d'ensemble, la méfiance, l'égoïsme et l'esprit de cabale a detruit durant deux campagnes de suite toutes les mesures prises, et fait échouer les projets concertés des armées combinées.

Accablé du malheur d'être enveloppé par les fautes d'autrui, dans la situation très facheuse, où je me trouve,

[1] Massenbach, *Memoiren*, vol. i. pp. 363–366. These letters are given in German at pp. 445–448.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. i.

je sens vivement que le monde juge les militaires d'après les succès sans en examiner la cause.

La levée du blocus de Landau fera époque dans l'histoire de cette malheureuse guerre, et j'ai la douleur d'etre cruellement compromis ; je ne m'aveugle pas pour me faire illusion que j'échapperai à la critique ; je sens au contraire qu'elle tombera sur moi, et que l'innocent sera confondu avec le coupable.

Malgré toutes ces adversités je ne me serois point laissé aller à mettre à Vos pieds, Sire, mon désir pour quitter une carrière, qui a fait la principale occupation de mes jours ; mais quand on a perdu ses peines, son travail, ses efforts, quand, à Mayence près, les fruits de toute la campagne sont perdus, et qu'il n'y a aucun espoir, qu'une troisième campagne offrira des résultats plus avantageux, quel parti reste-t-il à prendre à l'homme le plus zélé et le plus attaché à Votre Majesté et à la cause, que celui d'éviter de nouveaux malheurs ?

Les mêmes raisons diviseront les puissances coalisées qui les ont divisées jusqu'ici ; les mouvements des armées souffriront, comme ils en ont souffert ; leur marche en sera ralentie, embarrassée ; et le retard du rétablissement de l'armée prussienne, politiquement nécessaire, peut-etre deviendra la cause d'un autre côté d'une suite de malheurs pour la campagne prochaine, dont les conséquences sont incalculables.

Ce n'est point la guerre qui me répugne ; ce n'est point elle que je cherche à éviter ; mais c'est le déshonneur que je redoute dans une position, où les fautes des autres généraux tombent et retourneront toutes sur moi, et où je ne pourrois jamais agir ni d'après mes principes, ni d'après mes propres vues.

Votre Majesté se rappella peut-être ce que j'ai eu l'honneur de Vous représenter, Sire, le jour du départ de V.M. d'Eschweiler. J'ai prévu mes embarras, mes peines et mes malheurs ; j'ai employé tous mes efforts de remédier

aux inconveniens ; malheureusement pour moi l'effet en a prouvé l'insuffisance.

Ce n'est donc que la persuasion intime que j'ai de l'impossibilité d'opérer le bien qui me dicte la démarche de supplier très-humblement V.M. de me nommer un successeur le plutôt possible. Cette démarche très affligeante pour moi, est cependant une suite des tristes réflexions que j'ai faites sur mon sort. La prudence exige ma retraite, et l'honneur la conseille. Lorsqu'une grande nation, telle que la française, est conduite par la terreur des supplices et l'enthousiasme aux grandes actions, une même volonté, le même principe, devroit présider la démarche des puissances coalisées. Mais lorsque au lieu de cela, chaque armée agit seule pour elle-même sans aucun plan fixé, sans unité, sans principe et sans méthode, les resultats en sont tels que nous les avons vus à Dunkerke, à la levée du blocus de Maubeuge, au Sac de Lyon, à la destruction de Toulon, et à la levée du blocus de Landau.

Veuille le ciel préserver surtout V.M. et ses armées de plus grands malheurs ; mais tout est à craindre, si la confiance, l'harmonie, l'unité de principes et d'actions ne prennent la place des sentimens opposés, qui depuis deux ans sont la cause de tous nos malheurs.

Mes vœux accompagneront sans cesse toutes les démarches de V.M. et Votre gloire, Sire, fera mon bonheur.

III

DENKSCHRIFT DES HERZOGS VON BRAUNSCHWEIG.[1]

Berlin, 31 Décembre 1805.

Les malheurs inouis, produits par l'inconséquence, l'imprudence, et l'éloignement de toute sagesse dans la conduite des armées russes et autrichiennes, ont amené un ordre de choses qui, tout fâcheux et embarrassant qu'il puisse être, exige cependant une détermination prompte, pour éviter des avanies de la part de l'Empereur Napoléon, lesquelles, en les repoussant avec les succès auxquels les armées du roi ont droit de s'attendre, ne conduiraient néanmoins à aucun avantage réel pour la Prusse. Il s'ensuit de là qu'on ne saurait se dispenser d'accepter la convention du 15 décembre, se ménageant cependant quelques exceptions, propres à prévenir l'isolement de la Prusse du reste de l'Europe, et nommément de la Russie, et en rejetant tout l'odieux que l'acquisition du pays de Hanovre pourrait produire un jour, aux yeux de la malveillance, sur la nécessité d'empêcher que ce pays ne devînt le partage d'un prince de la maison d'Autriche.

D'après ces points de vue, je hasarde de proposer que l'alliance à conclure avec la France ne soit que défensive. Voici, ce me semble, les motifs à alléguer à l'Empereur Napoléon. Il n'ignore pas que la Prusse a un traité d'alliance avec la Russie antérieur à la convention du 3 novembre : elle ne saurait ni le rompre, ni exciter un haut degré de méfiance contre elle, si la France, comme elle le désire, veut que la Prusse reste en mesure avec la Russie pour la ramener à un rapprochement avec la France. D'ailleurs la Prusse doit faire rétrograder les troupes russes d'une manière amicale, opérer par les Russes sur les

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten des Staatskanzlers Fürsten von Hardenberg*, vol. v. p. 259.

Anglais et les Suédois dans le pays de Hanovre, par conséquent éloigner tout soupçon qui pourrait causer de l'aigreur contre elle. Or il n'y a sur le continent, après les pertes que l'Autriche essuie, aucune puissance que la Russie contre laquelle un traité offensif pourrait être applicable. Si cependant, malgré toutes ces raisons, l'Empereur Napoléon devait insister sur l'expression du terme offensif, je soumets à peser si on ne pourrait avoir recours à l'expédient de dresser un article séparé et secret, par lequel les cas particuliers qui pourraient obliger la Prusse à l'offensive fussent explicitement énoncés. D'un autre côté on pourrait rappeler à la Russie que l'empereur Alexandre proposa lui-même une convention, dans laquelle la France devait entrer, pour servir de garantie mutuelle à la sûreté des possessions respectives. Un autre motif qui pourrait servir à rapprocher la Russie de la France serait celui de lui donner à connaître, selon l'opinion de Laforest, que le roi de Naples pourrait être sauvé par son intervention.

J'ignore si, relativement à la prise de possession du pays de Hanovre après la paix avec l'Angleterre, on ne pourrait glisser dans l'art. 2 du mémoire Explicatif: 'Sa Majesté accepte cette cession que Sa Majesté l'Empereur Napoléon compte lui faire, d'autant plus que l'établissement d'un prince étranger dans le nord de l'Allemagne n'aurait offert qu'une source nouvelle aux inconvénients auxquels on s'occupait de remédier.' On ne saurait, ce me semble, donner assez à connaître que le roi n'accepte le pays de Hanovre sans compensation pour le roi d'Angleterre, que pour prévenir que la France ne l'assigne à la paix à quelqu'autre, et qu'en conséquence c'est devenu plus une mesure de nécessité que de simple convenance. Si au reste le but de cette alliance, que je ne puis regarder que comme périlleuse pour la Prusse, vu qu'il n'est que trop à apprehender que l'arrière-pensée de l'empereur Napoléon ne soit de nous isoler, de nous employer à ses propres vues

lorsqu'il le jugera à propos de forcer la Prusse à faire la guerre pour la France à ses propres frais et dépens, si, dis-je, cette alliance peut servir à calmer pour le moment les maux qu'une imprudence vraiment criminelle a attirés sur l'Allemagne et l'Italie, nous conserver des rapports d'amitié avec la Russie, et éloigner de la Prusse les impressions fâcheuses que la privation du roi d'Angleterre de son patrimoine peut faire naître, je crois qu'on pourra se féliciter d'avoir empêché des maux plus considérables de ceux qui existent déjà, et de devenir, pour ainsi dire, le modérateur des effervescences politiques intarissables de cet homme extraordinaire, que les fautes inépuisables de ses adversaires, autant que son habileté, son intelligence et son audace, ont élevé à la puissance démesurée dont il jouit en Europe.

CHARLES DUC DE BRUNSWICK.

LETTRE DU DUC DE BRUNSWICK À HARDENBERG, 16 MARS 1806.[1]

Monsieur !—Il ne m'est pas possible d'exprimer à Votre Excellence ce que j'ai ressenti en apprenant le triste dénouement de la négociation de Paris ; tout est à sauver si on le veut, mon rapport vous en dira le reste, pourvu que l'on décide. Je compte d'être le 23 ou le 24 à Berlin, et j'espère de mettre sous les yeux de Votre Excellence plusieurs objets qui pourront devenir utiles. Que l'on abandonne l'idée de s'approprier Hambourg. Cela ne plairait tout au plus qu'à Paris, pour nous brouiller entièrement avec toutes les puissances qui ne fléchissent pas devant le dispensateur des trônes.

CHARLES, DUC DE BRUNSWICK.

Memel, le 16 mars 1806.

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten des Staatskanzlers Fürsten von Hardenberg*, vol. ii. p. 568.

RAPPORT DU DUC DE BRUNSWICK AU ROI DE PRUSSE, 16 MARS 1806.[1]

Sire!—Arrivé à Memel, je n'ai rien de plus pressé que d'informer très humblement Votre Majesté que ce fut le 11 mars, au sortir de la porte de Saint-Pétersbourg, que je reçus par le chasseur Hacke la lettre dont Votre Majesté m'a honoré en date du 27 février; je rentrai tout de suite en ville et me rendis chez M. le comte de Goltz, ne pouvant retourner au palais de l'Empereur, ayant pris congé la veille de Sa Majesté. Je me fis annoncer incessamment au prince Czartoryski; il vint me trouver lui-même, et en lui remettant votre lettre, Sire, à Sa Majesté l'Empereur, je lui fis la lecture de la lettre ostensible que Votre Majesté avait daigné m'adresser. Comme on avait cru prévoir que l'Empereur Napoléon n'accepterait pas le mémoire explicatif, comme on en avait fait mention dans la première note de l'Empereur jointe à mon rapport du 25 février, on était moins surpris d'un procédé aussi peu amical de l'Empereur Napoléon et aussi peu compatible avec les sentiments d'un allié; cependant le prince Czartoryski marqua des craintes que les prétentions du gouvernement français ne se borneraient pas là; qu'elles iraient successivement en augmentant, et que tôt ou tard vos intérêts, Sire, pourraient se trouver dangereusement compromis. Appelé chez l'Empereur, je le trouvais excessivement ému, il avait peine à m'exprimer son profond chagrin, et se trouvait hors d'état de pouvoir écrire à Votre Majesté. En voyant ce prince si profondément touché, je demandais la permission à Sa Majesté de noter sous ses yeux ce qu'il désira qui parvint préalablement en réponse Votre Majesté. Il me dicta alors, les larmes à l'œil, les lignes que j'ai l'honneur de joindre avec le plus

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten des Staatskanzlers Fürsten von Hardenberg*, vol. ii. p. 58.

profond respect. L'Empereur ne doute aucunement de la sincérité de vos sentiments, Sire; mais il craint plus que jamais que le gouvernement français forcera tôt ou tard Votre Majesté à des démarches lesquelles, quoique contraires à vos sentiments, Sire, seront néanmoins adoptées faute d'être préparé d'avance à résister à l'injustice. L'Empereur espère de là que Votre Majesté trouvera de ses intérêts d'accepter en tout ou en partie les propositions réciproques et secrètes entre Votre Majesté et Sa Majesté l'Empereur que j'ai eu l'honneur de vous présenter, Sire, par mon dernier rapport de Saint-Pétersbourg du 8 mars, et il croit en outre qu'il serait de l'intérêt de Votre Majesté de tenir sur le pied de guerre le plus de troupes possible; c'est la persuasion qu'il croit avoir que c'est l'unique moyen propre à éviter des avanies qui l'engage à me charger de communiquer ses idées à Votre Majesté. Parmi les premiers objets que l'Empereur, ainsi que le prince Czartoryski, croient auxquelles la France voudra engager Votre Majesté, se trouve la fermeture des débouchés de l'Elbe et du Weser et des querelles qu'ils voudront susciter à l'Électeur de Hesse, outre les troubles qu'ils tâcheront de faire naître à Constantinople, et dans lesquels ils chercheront à faire prendre part à Votre Majesté, contre la Russie.

Vos explications ultérieures, Sire, sur le mémoire qui accompagnait mon rapport du 8 de ce mois, pourront seules obvier aux doutes et incertitudes que l'éloignement et la lenteur des communications ne cessent de faire renaître. Je le crois de mon devoir de joindre ici le précis de deux conversations que j'ai eues 8 et 9 mars avec le prince Czartoryski, et qui développent plusieurs idées qu'il est des intérêts de Votre Majesté qu'Elle les connaisse. Daignez, Sire, continuer à compter au reste sur l'amitié sincère et inébranlable de l'Empereur. Il est profondément affligé, mais ses sentiments et ceux de son cabinet sont parfaitement les mêmes. L'Empereur soutiendra Votre

Majesté avec toutes les forces dès que vos interêts l'exigeront. Un des motifs principaux qui a accéléré mon départ de Saint-Petersbourg, où je n'ai eu d'ailleurs qu'à me louer des bontés infinies qu'on a eues pour moi, a été qu'on voulait m'engager à travailler à un plan militaire et à discuter le mémoire que j'ai remis à Votre Majesté. Je m'en suis excusé en alléguant que, pour les deux objets, il me fallait des ordres exprès, qu'en hâtant mon voyage je m'emploierais à tout ce que Votre Majesté trouverait bon de disposer de moi.

Je ne dois pas laisser ignorer à Votre Majesté qu'ayant parlé à Saint-Pétersbourg au sieur Lecepce, agent commercial de France, et qui, par la prudence de sa conduite, s'est attiré l'estime des personnes en place, je fais passer par cette estafette une lettre de sa part au sieur Laforest, dans laquelle il y en a une pour M. de Talleyrand, auquel il communique les observations générales que je lui ai faites d'après les indications du prince Czartoryski, sur le rapprochement entre la Russie et la France. J'espère d'être rendu le 23 ou 24 à Berlin aux pieds de Votre Majesté.

CHARLES, DUC DE BRUNSWICK.

Memel, le 16 Mars 1806.

LETTRE DU DUC DE BRUNSWICK À HARDENBERG, 22 MARS, 1806.[1]

Monsieur!—J'ai reçu entre Friedeberg et Driesen par M. d'Osorowsky la lettre en date du 20 de ce mois, dont Votre Excellence a bien voulu m'honorer. Je compte être rendu demain 23 entre huit et neuf heures du soir à Berlin, et en suivant vos volontés, je ne manquerai pas d'en informer tout de suite Votre Excellence. Elle aura reçu en attendant mon rapport du 16 de Memel, par

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten des Staatskanzlers von Hardenberg*, vol. v. p. 575.

lequel elle aura vu que j'ai reçu au moment de sortir de Saint-Pétersbourg la lettre du Roi et celle de sa Majesté pour l'Empereur. Des lettres particulières de Berlin disent que les ratifications de Bonaparte sont arrivées après le retour du marquis Lucchesini à Paris. C'est un répit dont je souhaite que nous profitions pour former des magasins, et pour nous arranger solidement, et dans le plus profond secret, avec la Russie. Je pourrai indiquer plusieurs modifications à la déclaration réciproque proposée au Roi; pourvu qu'on entre en matière avec la Russie, et qu'on prenne grand soin de ne pas lui donner de soupçons, je me flatte que le Roi pourra en tirer grande partie.

CHARLES, DUC DE BRUNSWICK.

Landsberg, le 22 mars, 1806, à 10 heures du soir.

GOLTZ À HARDENBERG, ST. PÉTERSBURG, 8 MARS, 1806.[1]

Monsieur le Baron!—C'est à la réquisition expresse de Monseigneur le duc de Brunswick que j'expédie aujourd'hui le chasseur Schmidt, dont les dépêches importantes parviendront à Votre Excellence par la voie d'une estafette de Memel.

Je n'ai dans ma position rien à y ajouter—mais j'en ai une connaissance plénière. Le duc n'a fait ici aucun pas sans s'en concerter d'avance avec moi, et j'ose me flatter qu'il me rendra la justice que mon zèle lui a été de quelque utilité. Sa mission a eu tous les succès que le moment pouvait lui assurer. La mauvaise impression du passé est entièrement détruite, et il ne dépend que de nous de tirer notre parti de l'avenir. Sa Majesté l'Empereur, en donnant au Roi l'autorisation de faire travailler indirectement, à

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten des Staatskanzlers von Hardenberg*, vol. ii. p. 547.

Paris, à un rapprochement entre la Russie et la France, lui offre le prétexte le plus plausible pour éviter tout ce qui pourrait compromettre ses relations actuelles avec la France, et pour faire à celle-ci illusion sur ce qui, en secret, fait le vœu de l'Empereur et la base de la sécurité de la Prusse. Je peux me vanter d'avoir eu le mérite d'engager le prince Czartoryski à revenir de ses premières idées infiniment plus guerroyantes à une proposition qui au moins nous présente encore la chance de pouvoir conjurer l'orage pour quelque temps. Je ne doute aussi aucunement que le mémoire qui se trouve joint à la dépêche adressée au Roi, et dont le temps n'a pas permis de tirer copie pour le département, ne réponde, modifications gardées, aux idées de V.E. Le moment est venu où il s'agit de voter entre la Russie et la France ; si nous le négligeons, nous ne retrouverons plus les mêmes dispositions dans la suite.

On est disposé à nous soutenir de tous moyens, et ce n'est pas seulement l'opinion de l'Empereur ; c'est l'opinion de toute la nation. On est disposé même à faire de grands sacrifices pour cet effet ; daignez, Monsieur le Baron, ne pas oublier cette circonstance.

Je n'ai pas besoin de dire d'ailleurs à V.E. combien il importe et à la Prusse et à la Russie que le mémoire en question reste un secret pour tout le monde. Il n'y a que le Roi et V.E. qui doivent en avoir connaissance. Je l'ai lu et j'en ai tiré copie par un effet tout particulier de la confiance du prince de Czartoryski. Il désirerait que je fusse exclusivement chargé de porter cet accord désiré à son terme—mais comment vous parler de cela, Monsieur le Baron, sans annoncer des prétentions qui ne sont aucunement de ma compétence ? Je verrai venir avec résignation, pourvu qu'on ne tarde pas à se décider.

Le duc de Brunswick me conjure de représenter à V.E. la nécessité d'une prompte décision. Il la prie d'ailleurs par mon organe de veiller au plus scrupuleux secret. Il

lui dira de vive voix combien on a de soupçons à cet égard et combien cela gêne les combinaisons de cette cour.

L'apparition du marquis de Lucchesini à Berlin a fait beaucoup de sensation. On craint que les propositions dont il est peut-être chargé ne soient en contradiction avec les vœux de la cour d'içi ; on craint plus encore qu'on n'ait peut-être déjà pris son parti à l'heure qu'il est sans avoir consulté autre chose que le désir de maintenir la paix. On est fort alarmé, mais très disposé à nous soutenir ; et c'est beaucop dans un moment où nous n'avons rien fait pour nous concilier la confiance de cette cour. Nous avons fait des merveilles pour réussir à détruire la défiance. Jamais je n'ai eu içi un moment plus difficile et plus embarrassant, mais le savoir-faire du duc nous a été d'une très grande ressource.

Ce vénérable guerrier a inspiré une confiance universelle. J'en ai profité pour tourner les choses au mieux. Puisse le Roi vouloir profiter de cette chance ; elle est sans doute la dernière qui se présente pour l'indépendance de la monarchie prussienne. Dieu m'en est témoin—je ne suis pas Russe—je ne suis certainement pas payé pour l'être—j'ai beaucoup souffert dans ce pays-ci—je connais tous les travers de la nation—mais je le dois à la vérité—les dispositions ne nous ont jamais été plus favorables que dans ce moment de la crise.

L'animosité contre la France et le désir de tirer vengeance sur le passé les ont poussés au point que je réponds de la sincérité et de l'efficacité de l'assistance de cette cour. Il ne dépend que du Roi de parler—il obtiendra tout ce qu'il voudra ; et c'est cependant un avantage, quand de l'autre côté on ne fait que nous forcer à des traités désavantageux et ne pense qu'à nous humilier et nous faire la loi. Je demande pardon à V.E. mais je parle à mon chef, et le devoir veut que je dise la vérité.

Le duc est fort inquiet de ne pas avoir reçu aucun renseignement sur les affaires du moment. Le courrier

nous a été annoncé par M. d'Alopæus, mais il n'est pas encore arrivé, et cela ne cause pas peu de chagrin au duc. Pardonnez, Monsieur le Baron, la vitesse avec laquelle je vous écris. La cour et le duc absorbent tellement mon temps, que je n'ai presque pas une minute à ma disposition.

GOLTZ.

Saint-Pétersbourg, le 8 mars 1806.

GOLTZ AU ROI DE PRUSSE LE 14 MARS, 1806.[1]

Rien n'est plus triste que l'effet qu'a produit ici la nouvelle que les derniers ordres de Votre Majesté nous ont communiquée. Elle a rempli, Sire, le cœur de votre auguste allié de ce sentiment de douleur et de peine que seulement l'amitié éprouve quand elle s'alarme sur la durée d'une liaison qui lui est chère ; et tel que le véritable ami est jaloux d'éclaircir ses doutes, tel l'Empereur n'a des vœux que pour le parti qui puisse le plus efficacement le rassurer sur la continuation de relations de la plus intime intelligence entre la Prusse et la Russie. Ce monarque sent peut-être plus qu'il ne le dit que le parti que Votre Majesté vient de prendre n'est que la suite d'une malheureuse tournure des circonstances auxquelles la Russie ne laisse pas d'avoir sa part ; mais il est intimement persuadé qu'il est encore temps de vous mettre, Sire, à couvert du danger futur de voir interprété le traité de Vienne de manière à vous imposer des obligations qui gêneraient la pureté de vos intentions et l'indépendance de votre volonté. Les sacrifices que vous portez maintenant, Sire, à la nécessité d'éviter la guerre sont justifiés autant par les considérations de l'inégalité des chances, que par le désir de maintenir, autant que possible, la tranquillité dont a joui jusqu'à présent le nord de l'Allemagne sous votre gracieuse protection. Ils sont également expliqués par les justes calculs de la prudence qui ne permettent pas de commencer une

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten des Staatskanzlers von Hardenberg*, ii. 585–7.

lutte sans y être préparé. Mais on ne regarde pas ces sacrifices comme les derniers que la France vous demandera ; on craint que la France n'y attachera d'autres prétentions qui, tôt ou tard, vous forceront à prendre un parti plus vigoureux, et dans cette vue, le prince Czartoryski m'a encore répété hier que l'Empereur vous invite, Sire, à peser dans votre sagesse les ouvertures que le duc de Brunswick est chargé de vous porter, en vous engageant à y répondre sans perte de temps d'une manière catégorique et positive.

Le moment est venu où, d'après l'opinion du ministère de Russie, la France vous forcera, Sire, d'opter entre elle et la Russie, et si je ne crois pas que les choses en soient déjà à ce terme, le devoir veut cependant que je dise qu'on le suppose ici, d'après les derniers rapports du sieur d'Alopæus, et qu'on est doublement intéressé à savoir à quoi s'en tenir à cet égard. Actuellement toutes les dispositions sont encore exclusivement pour vous, Sire, mais plus tard, ce ne sera peut-être plus le cas ; car la défiance et les soupçons s'en mêleront et altéreront jusqu'à la façon de penser de l'Empereur. S'il s'agissait de prendre les armes pour vous défendre, Sire, il n'y a pas de sacrifice que la cour de Saint-Pétersbourg ne ferait pour vous assister. L'amitié les dicterait, et l'intérêt personnel de venger le passé les rendrait efficaces. Mais on prévoit avec raison qu'un tel degré de détermination n'est plus de la compétence du moment, et qu'il faut aviser à d'autres mesures pour y parvenir. 'Passons l'éponge sur le passé,' me dit encore hier le prince Czartoryski, 'et préparons nous pour l'avenir.' C'est en effet le seul but que vous présentent les ouvertures les plus récentes de la Russie. Elle ne vous provoque pas directement à la guerre ; au contraire, elle vous laisse, Sire, la faculté de conjurer l'orage par toutes les précautions nécessaires à adopter : mais elle vous présente la nécessité de prendre des engagements éventuels et secrets, pour le double but de la consolidation d'une intimité que la France a le désir de détruire, et pour la sûreté future de

vos propres possessions. Il doit rester réservé au duc de Brunswick de vous expliquer, Sire, de vive voix toutes les explications rassurantes qui dérivent du résultat de ses communications directes. Je ne pousserai pas l'audace jusqu'à prévoir le parti que, d'après les véritables intérêts de la Prusse, il importerait à Votre Majesté de prendre ; mais il est de mon devoir de dire que, dans tous les cas, elle trouvera l'Empereur très disposé à se régler sur les vues pour ce qui regarde la sûreté de l'avenir, pourvu qu'il lui plaise de ne pas rompre entièrement le fil des explications à entamer sur cet objet. Cette dernière précaution me paraît très essentielle, si nous voulons conserver la Russie pour amie et ne pas la mettre dans le cas de s'opposer efficacement à l'acquisition du Hanovre. C'est pour la première fois que j'ose dire mon avis ; mais, Sire, aussi le moment est tel que je serais indigne de votre confiance, si je n'avais pas l'énergie de vous dire les choses telles qu'elles se présentent ici. Je supplie Votre Majesté de m'accorder son indulgence et d'être persuadée que ce que je dis n'est pas une simple conjecture.

S'il fallait, pour engager la France à évacuer l'Allemagne, que les Russes quittent le territoire allemand aussitôt que possible, il ne coûtera qu'un mot à Votre Majesté pour les faire arrêter en totalité sur les frontières de la Russie et pour les y faire rester à sa disposition, fournis de magasins. Cette mesure ne pourra pas blesser la France, parce qu'elle fera probablement la même chose avec ses armées, qu'elle fera arrêter, à ce qu'on présume, derrière le Rhin, et il sera toujours bon de savoir dans ce cas les Russes rassemblés en corps et en état de voler, en cas de besoin, à notre secours. Il faudra couvrir ces mesures du plus profond secret ; mais il y aurait moyen d'y seconder, si Votre Majesté voulait m'accorder assez de confiance pour m'en charger.

GOLTZ.

Saint-Pétersbourg, le 14 mars 1806.

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